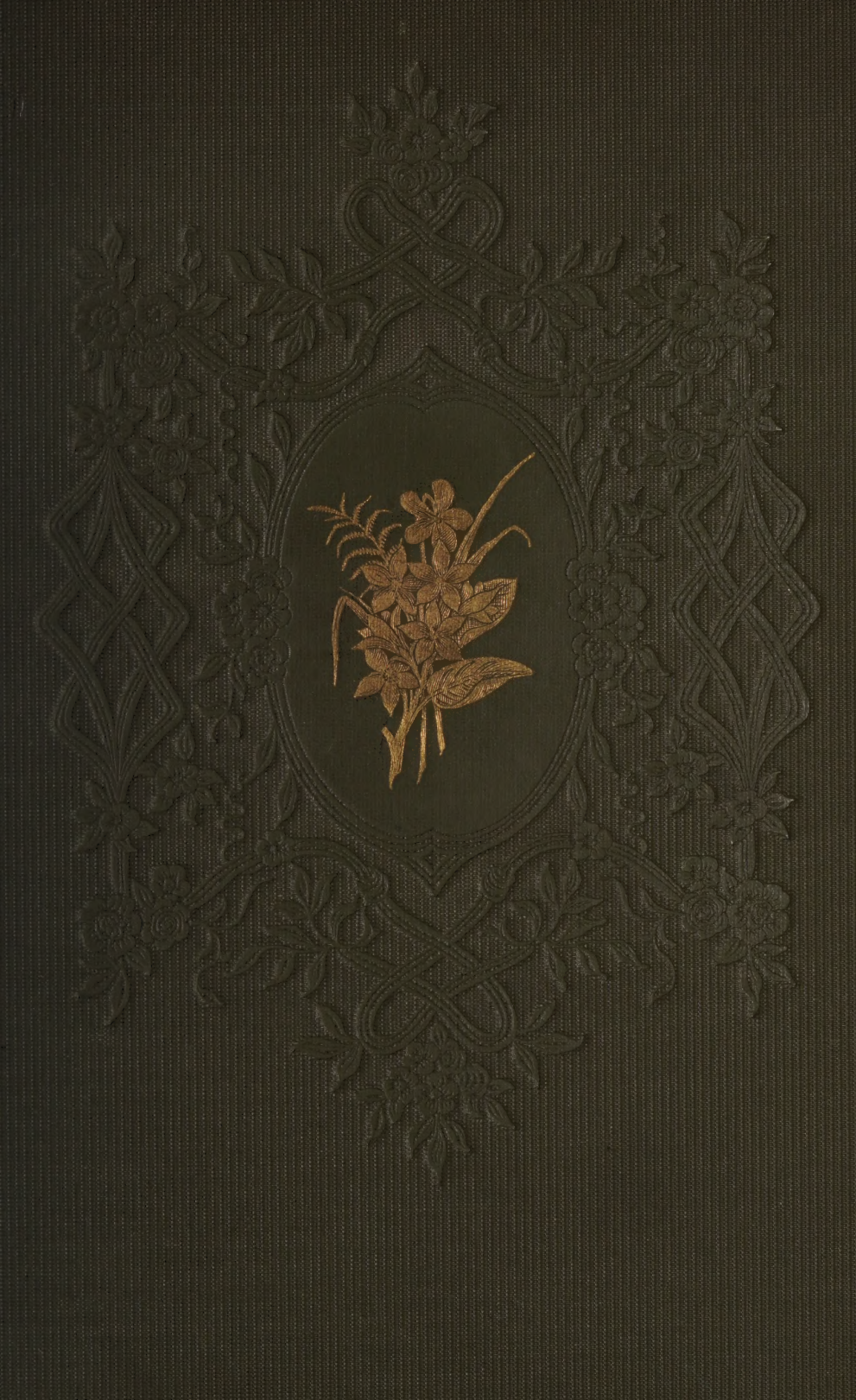

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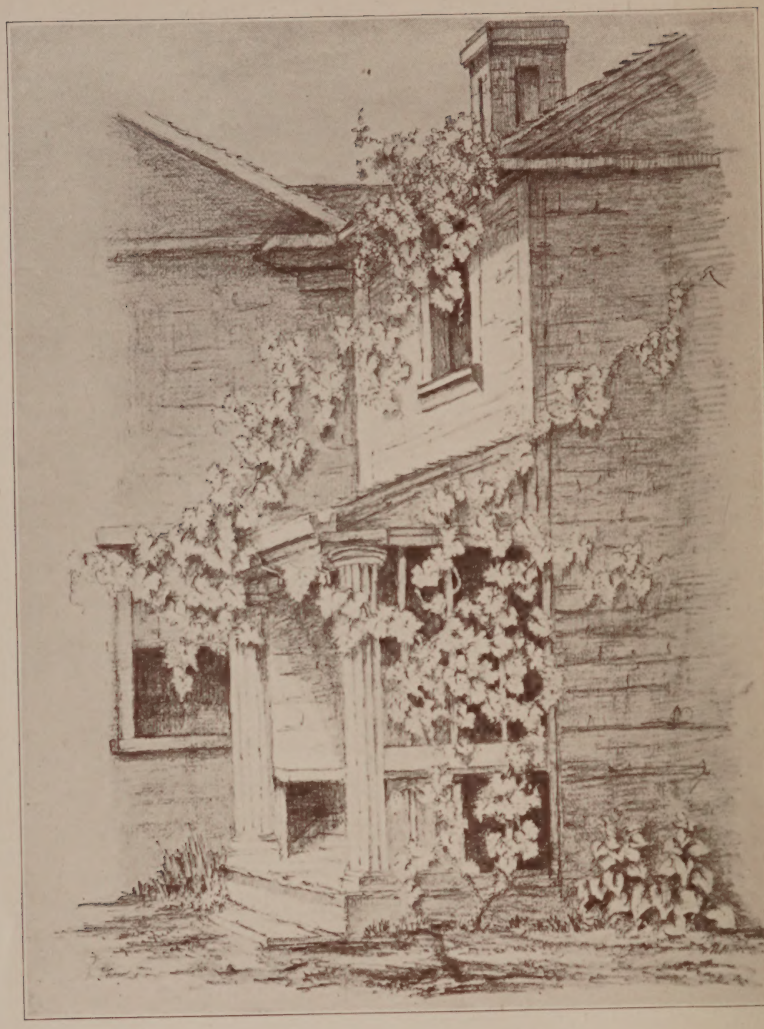


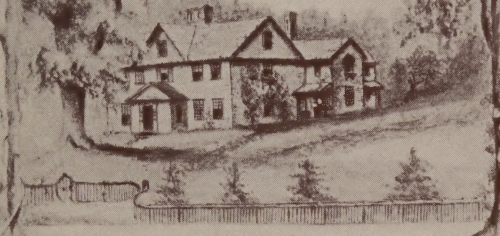
PORCH OF 'ORCHARD HOUSE'

Classic Concord

As Portrayed by Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau and the Alcotts

Edited by Caroline Ticknor

Drawings by May Alcott



Houghton Mifflin Company
1926

CLASSIC CONCORD

AS PORTRAYED BY
EMERSON, HAWTHORNE, THOREAU
AND THE ALCOTTS

Edited, with Biographical Sketches, by
CAROLINE TICKNOR

Illustrated with Drawings by
MAY ALCOTT

Boston and New York
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1926

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The Riverside Press

CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

PREFACE

THE beautiful old town of Concord, Massachusetts, about which cluster countless memories dear to this nation's heart, is not one place, but many.

It is the Concord of archæological tradition, revealing innumerable records and relics of its early Indian settlement. It is historic Concord, where was fired the 'shot heard round the world,' the place in which the opening chapter of the American Revolution was enacted. It is Concord, the home of many distinguished sons and daughters, who have bequeathed it a rich heritage, and whose abiding-places have become sacred literary shrines. It is the Concord of philosophic thought, home of the famed School of Philosophy; and it is Concord, the town of lovely dwellings, of meadows, streams, and woods.

But there is still another Concord, more permanent than all the rest: a Concord that has, through its appeal to the heart and soul of its true sons of genius, placed its fair name among the classics; a Concord that is inscribed upon the honor-roll of Literature.

Time may obscure historic Concord; may turn the footsteps of the literary pilgrim towards other shrines; may totally transform the lovely Concord, of hill and vale, of stream and habitation, perchance obliterate its monuments and fair memorials; but in the permanent record of the World's Literature, the Concord of Hawthorne and Emerson, of Thoreau and the Alcotts,

shall remain beautiful and all unchanged, as pictured by each magic pen. A Classic Concord, unharmed by time, unspoiled by progress.

Throughout the works of this notable group are scattered so many exquisite descriptions and vivid pictures of Concord's history, life, and natural beauty, that it has seemed worth while to glean from this material selections suitable for this volume.

And from this presentation of Concord in Literature the reader may perchance awaken to a keener appreciation of Nature's bounty; an increased respect for those hardy New England pioneers, from whose achievements and character have sprung much of this nation's power and greatness; and, above all, may derive fresh inspiration from sharing the vision of these exalted souls, who were at all times conscious of the Eternal Goodness shining through every gift of Nature, and glorifying all human endeavor.

C. T.

NOTE

ACKNOWLEDGMENT is made to Messrs. Little, Brown & Company for permission to use the material from *Concord Days*, by A. Bronson Alcott; from *Louisa May Alcott: Her Life, Letters, and Journals*, by Ednah D. Cheney; and from *Hospital Sketches* and *Little Women*, by Louisa M. Alcott. Thanks are also due to Mrs. F. Alcott Pratt, of Concord, for permission to reproduce the illustrations from May Alcott's *Concord Sketches* and especially for the privilege of reproducing for the title-page an original drawing by May Alcott which is now in her possession.

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EMERSON'S CONCORD

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Concord is so closely identified with Emerson, and Emerson with Concord, that one is led to forget that the 'Sage' was, after all, city born and bred. He first saw the light of day on May 25, 1803, in the old parish house of the First Church of Boston, on Summer Street. This locality, which is now the heart of the business district, was then a neighborhood of gardens and open pasture spaces. There the 'spiritual-looking boy in blue nankeen,' who had behind him an ancestry of seven Puritan divines, spent his early years; he was one of a large household presided over by a widowed mother and trained in the habit of 'going without.'

Emerson's early life was spent in Boston, and it was not until he had passed his thirtieth year that he became a resident of Concord, long the home of his forbears. In the meantime he had graduated from Harvard College, and, after a period of teaching, had taken up the study of theology, though his ill health and weakness of eyesight had prevented him from pursuing the regular theological course. After some preliminary preaching, Emerson was ordained in 1829, as colleague of Henry Ware, Jr., minister of the Second Church, Boston. In September of that year, he married Miss Ellen Louisa Tucker, to whom is addressed his charming poem entitled 'To Ellen in the South.' Three years after their marriage, she

died of consumption after a prolonged illness, and a few months before her death Emerson resigned his ministerial post, feeling that he could not conform to the traditions of the church.

After the death of his wife, his own health broke down, and he spent several months in Europe, where he was welcomed by the most distinguished men of his day, and where he began the friendship with Carlyle which proved a lifelong satisfaction to both men.

Upon his return from Europe, Emerson, who had determined to pursue a literary career, decided to settle in Concord, the home of his ancestors. The year 1834 found him staying at the 'Old Manse,' the house built for his grandfather, the Reverend William Emerson, whose widow had married the Reverend Ezra Ripley. During the summer spent with Dr. Ripley, Emerson composed some of his finest essays, and, the year following, delivered a course of biographical lectures in Boston which won him many friends and admirers. In 1835, he married, for his second wife, Miss Lydia Jackson, of Plymouth, and shortly afterwards moved into the house which since that time has been identified with him and his family.

On April 19, 1836, a meeting was held to commemorate the completion of the Concord Monument, and on this occasion, Dr. Ripley read Emerson's 'Concord Hymn,' written for this celebration and containing the immortal lines:

> Here once the embattled farmers stood,
> And fired the shot heard round the world.

CONCORD MONUMENT

'Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world'

To the happy household in their new home two sons and two daughters were born, and there, for eighteen years (until her death), Emerson's mother dwelt with them, her room being the Mecca and delight of the grandchildren. A sad bereavement came to them in the loss of the eldest boy, at five years of age; an acute sorrow which Emerson has commemorated in his exquisite 'Threnody.'

Louisa Alcott, who was identified with the youthful circle at this time, has said of it:

'When we went to school with the little Emersons in their father's barn, I remember many happy times when the illustrious papa was our good playfellow. Often piling us into a bedecked haycart, he took us to berry, bathe, or picnic at Walden, making our day charming and memorable by showing us the places he loved, the wood-people Thoreau had introduced to him, or the wildflowers whose hidden homes he had discovered. So that when years afterwards, we read of "the sweet Rhodora in the woods," and the "burly, dozing Humble Bee," or laughed over "The Mountain and the Squirrel," we recognized old friends, and thanked him for the delicate truth and beauty which made them immortal for us and others.

'When the book mania fell upon me at fifteen, I used to venture into Mr. Emerson's library and ask what I should read, never conscious of the audacity of my demand, so genial was my welcome. His kind hand opened to me the riches of Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, and Carlyle; and I gratefully recall the sweet patience with which he led me round the book-lined

room till "the new and very interesting book" was found, or the indulgent smile he wore when I proposed something far above my comprehension. "Wait a little for that," he said. "Meantime, try this, and if you like it, come again." For many of these wise books I am waiting still, very patiently, because in his own I have found the truest delight, the best inspiration of my life.

'When these same precious volumes were tumbled out of the window while his house was burning some years ago, as I stood guarding the scorched, wet pile, Mr. Emerson passed by, and, surveying the devastation with philosophic calmness, only said, in answer to my lamentations, "I see my library under a new aspect. Could you tell me where my good neighbors have flung my boots?"

'In the tribulations of later life, this faithful house-friend was an earthly Providence, conferring favors so beautifully that they were no burden, and giving such sympathy in joy and sorrow that very tender ties were knit between this beneficent nature and the grateful hearts he made his own.'

Emerson added to his land by the purchase of an adjacent lot, thus making his estate comprise nine acres; he also bought a considerable tract of land by Walden Pond, where he liked to walk and meditate. The home to-day remains just as it was during the 'Sage's' occupancy. It stands on the old road, up which the British marched on the memorable 19th of April, 1775, and is a plain square wooden structure

partially concealed by a grove of pines. Tall chestnuts ornament the old-fashioned yard, through which a driveway leads to the barn in the rear. A garden fills half an acre at the back of the house, which was for many years famous for its roses and its rare collection of hollyhocks, old-time annuals and shrubs. From the road a gate, which is always open, leads over marble flagstones to the broad, low stoop before the hospitable door.

A hall divides the centre of the house, with two square rooms on either side, and near the entrance hangs, above a substantial mahogany table, an old picture of the blithe Ganymede, who perchance seems less at home in this intellectual environment than do Michelangelo's 'Fates,' who have been for years suspended over the fireplace in the adjoining room.

At the right as one enters is Emerson's study, which speaks most eloquently of the former occupant. The study is a plain square room, lined on one side with simple wooden shelves filled with choice books, which also nestle in various nooks and corners of the apartment whose windows look out on trees and meadows. A large mahogany table stands in the centre of the room covered with books, and by the morocco writing-pad, used constantly by its first possessor, lies the pen which has exerted so wide an influence over the thought of two continents. Close by the table is the compact little rocking-chair in which Emerson always sat and did his writing upon the pad which he invariably held in his lap. It is of interest to note, in connection with this favorite seat of Emerson's, that

the late Joel Chandler Harris also did all of his writing in one especial rocking-chair.

A large fireplace with a low grate occupies the lower end of the room, and on the mantel-shelf are busts and statuettes of prominent reformers, while near by stands a quaint idol brought from the Nile. Upon the walls are a few choice engravings, and in one corner a small picture, which if it could speak would utter a thrilling tale of adventure; it crossed the Atlantic in company with the ill-fated Countess Ossoli (Margaret Fuller), who, with her husband and child, was shipwrecked just off of Fire Island, and drowned close to the coast of her native land. The body of the child, and a trunk containing papers and other possessions belonging to Margaret Fuller, came ashore after this disaster, and in the trunk was found the little picture which remains among the treasures in Emerson's study.

Back of this room is a pleasant parlor, which extends over the southern quarter of the house. Hung with crimson curtains and carpeted with a warm color, it contains many objects of interest; among these is a beautiful portrait of one of Emerson's daughters (Mrs. Forbes), and a much-treasured picture sent by Carlyle, with its inscription of friendship on the back.

An oil painting, the work of Mrs. Hawthorne, hangs in one corner, and the visitor views with interest the old mirror, the quaint andirons, and many other things, each with a valued association. If one is favored with a glimpse of some of the rare books, he

may delight in the first editions and presentation copies, enhanced by autographs and annotations of many brother authors. A splendidly illustrated Dante in the original, with an inscription by Carlyle, rests upon the study-table, this being the last book that Miss Emerson read aloud to her father before his death.

On the stairs, one pauses before a bust of Emerson, by Daniel Chester French, and above the parlor, one may view with especial interest the bedroom of Mrs. Emerson, with its old-fashioned four-poster and other pieces of antique mahogany. Here from the bay-window one may look out over the garden which remained the delight of Mrs. Emerson after failing health confined her to her chamber.

It would be difficult to enumerate the long list of famous persons who have enjoyed the hospitality of this home, but among them may be mentioned Frederika Bremer, who journeyed from afar to listen to the words of wisdom uttered by the kindly master of the house. Here Margaret Fuller, and other intellectual spirits connected with 'The Dial,' met for conversation; Thoreau was a frequent visitor, and his 'Woodnotes' might never have been uttered but for the encouragement found here. Hawthorne and the Alcotts were among the neighboring visitors, and it was in Emerson's study that Bronson Alcott's first 'Conversations' were held. Here old John Brown was often welcomed, a plain, poorly dressed farmer, seemingly out of place and absorbed in his own plans, until some sudden allusion or chance remark would cause

his rugged features to kindle into animation. With merry games and dances, the school-children were yearly entertained here, and to these occasions they looked forward with joyous anticipation.

In the spring of 1873, the house was partially destroyed by fire, and its owner, whose health was already somewhat impaired, felt the shock keenly, though, as has been suggested, he witnessed the disaster with equanimity, remarking, 'But isn't it a magnificent blaze!'

A friend presented Emerson with five thousand dollars, and other admirers soon made a joint gift of nearly twelve thousand dollars, which, after some reluctance, he was persuaded to accept. During the rebuilding of his house, Emerson journeyed abroad, and on his return to Concord was given a noteworthy ovation. His townspeople met him at the station, garlands and decorations lined his path, and the school-children were drawn up in two smiling rows, through which he passed greeted by enthusiastic cheers which bespoke a 'prophet' for once appreciated 'in his own country.' All followed his carriage to the house, where 'Home, Sweet Home,' was sung to the accompaniment of a band. Here an arch of triumph had been erected, and as he entered his new study Emerson found his books, pictures, and keepsakes in their old order, quite as if they had never been disturbed.

Some years before his death, Emerson had begun to fail mentally, losing his memory little by little, though retaining his grasp upon literary topics up to the last. His life continued peaceful and tranquil, and he re-

mained in a cheerful and happy frame of mind to the end.

Emerson's last public appearances were at the Massachusetts Historical Society, when he read a paper on Carlyle, in February, 1881, and at the Concord School of Philosophy, where he lectured on 'Aristocracy,' in July of the same year. In April, 1882, he took a severe cold, and pneumonia developed. He passed away on April 27th, and amid general mourning was buried from the old church of his fathers, and laid in the grove of 'Sleepy Hollow,' where he rests close by his two friends Hawthorne and Thoreau.

Emerson's centenary was celebrated at Concord with fitting ceremonies in 1903, at which time Mr. Story declared:

'Many are the memories that make Concord famous among towns of which her children are proud, but of all who have dwelt here, he is preëminently the one who has made it a shrine to which pilgrims come from every land. His resting-place is the tomb of a prophet.'

SUNRISE

Would you know what joy is hid
In our green Musketaquid,
And for travelled eyes what charms
Draw us to these meadow farms,
Come and I will show you all
Makes each day a festival.

. . . .

Behold the miracle!
Thou saw'st but now the twilight sad
And stood beneath the firmament,
A watchman in a dark gray tent,
Waiting till God create the earth, —
Behold the new majestic birth!
The mottled clouds, like scraps of wool,
Steeped in the light are beautiful
What majestic stillness broods
Over these colored solitudes.
Sleeps the vast East in pleasèd peace,
Up the far mountain walls the streams increase
Inundating the heaven
With spouting streams and waves of light
Which round the floating isles unite: —
See the world below
Baptized with the pure element,
A clear and glorious firmament
Touched with life by every beam.
I share the good with every flower,
I drink the nectar of the hour: —
This is not the ancient earth
Whereof old chronicles relate
The tragic tales of crime and fate;
But rather, like its beads of dew
And dew-bent violets, fresh and new,
An exhalation of the time.

CHAPTER I

THE PLANTING

THE Puritans, to keep the remembrance of their unity one with another, and of their peaceful compact with the Indians, named their forest settlement CONCORD. They proceeded to build, under the shelter of the hill that extends for a mile along the north side of the Boston road, their first dwellings. The labors of a new plantation were paid by its excitements. I seem to see them, with their pious pastor, addressing themselves to the work of clearing the land. Natives of another hemisphere, they beheld, with curiosity, all the pleasing features of the American forest. The landscape before them was fair, if it was strange and rude. The little flower which at this season stars our woods and roadsides with its profuse blooms, might attract even eyes as stern as theirs with its humble beauty. The useful pine lifted its cones into the frosty air. The maple, which is already making the forest gay with its orange hues, reddened over those houseless men. The majestic summits of Wachusett and Monadnock, towering in the horizon, invited the steps of adventure westward.

As the season grew later, they felt its inconveniences. 'Many were forced to go barefoot and bareleg, and some in time of frost and snow, yet were they more healthy than now they are.' The land was low but healthy; and if, in common with all the settle-

ments, they found the air of America very cold, they might say with Higginson, after his description of the other elements, that 'New England may boast of the element of fire, more than all the rest; for all Europe is not able to afford to make so great fires as New England. A poor servant, that is to possess but fifty acres, may afford to give more wood for fire as good as the world yields, than many noblemen in England.' Many were their wants, but more their privileges. The light struggled in through windows of oiled paper, but they read the Word of God by it. They were fain to make use of their knees for a table, but their limbs were their own. Hard labor and spare diet they had, and off wooden trenchers, but they had peace and freedom, and the wailing of the tempest in the woods sounded kindlier in their ear than the smooth voice of the prelates, at home, in England. 'There is no people,' said their pastor to his little flock of exiles, 'but will strive to excel in something. What can we excel in, if not in holiness? If we look to number, we are the fewest; if to strength, we are the weakest; if to wealth and riches, we are the poorest of all the people of God through the whole world. We cannot excel nor so much as equal other people in these things; and if we come short in grace and holiness too, we are the most despicable people under heaven. Strive we, therefore, herein to excel, and suffer not this crown to be taken away from us.' The sermon fell into good and tender hearts; the people conspired with their teacher. Their religion was sweetness and peace amidst toil and tears. And, as we

are informed, 'the edge of their appetite was greater to spiritual duties at their first coming, in time of wants, than afterwards.'

Concord and the other plantations found themselves separate and independent of Boston, with certain rights of their own, which, what they were, time alone could fully determine; enjoying, at the same time, a strict and loving fellowship with Boston, and sure of advice and aid, on every emergency. Their powers were speedily settled by obvious convenience, and the towns learned to exercise a sovereignty in the laying of taxes; in the choice of their deputy to the house of representatives; in the disposal of the town lands; in the care of public worship, the school and the poor; and, what seemed of at least equal importance, to exercise the right of expressing an opinion on every question before the country. In a town-meeting, the great secret of political science was uncovered, and the problem solved, how to give every individual his fair weight in the government, without any disorder from numbers. In a town-meeting, the roots of society were reached. Here the rich gave counsel, but the poor also; and, moreover, the just and the unjust. He is ill informed who expects, on running down the Town Records for two hundred years, to find a church of saints, a metropolis of patriots, enacting wholesome and creditable laws. The constitution of the towns forbid it. In this open democracy, every opinion had utterance; every objection, every fact, every acre of land, every bushel of rye, its entire weight.

It is the consequence of this institution that not a

school-house, a public pew, a bridge, a pound, a mill-dam, hath been set up, or pulled down, or altered, or bought, or sold, without the whole population of this town having a voice in the affair. A general contentment is the result. And the people truly feel that they are lords of the soil. In every winding road, in every stone fence, in the smokes of the poor-house chimney, in the clock on the church, they read their own power, and consider, at leisure, the wisdom and error of their judgments.

About ten years after the planting of Concord, efforts began to be made to civilize the Indians, and 'to win them to the knowledge of the true God.' This, indeed, in so many words, is expressed in the charter of the colony as one of its ends; and this design is named first in the printed 'Considerations,' that inclined Hampden, and determined Winthrop and his friends, to come hither. The interest of the Puritans in the natives was heightened by a suspicion at that time prevailing that these were the lost ten tribes of Israel. The man of the woods might well draw on himself the compassion of the planters. His erect and perfect form, though disclosing some irregular virtues, was found joined to a dwindled soul. Master of all sorts of wood-craft, he seemed a part of the forest and the lake, and the secret of his amazing skill seemed to be that he partook of the nature and fierce instincts of the beasts he slew.

It was remarkable that the preaching was not wholly new to them. 'Their forefathers,' the Indians told Eliot, 'did know God, but after this they fell into

a deep sleep, and when they did awake, they quite forgot him.'

Such was, for half a century, the success of the general enterprise, that in 1676, there were five hundred and sixty-seven praying Indians, and in 1687, twenty-four Indian preachers, and eighteen assemblies.

These praying Indians were for some time a great defence, but outrages were committed against them and in the end they were expelled from the town. After King Philip's War, in which the red man made a desperate struggle to regain his supremacy in his original haunts, his power in this vicinity was at an end, and of twenty tribes that once inhabited this region but a few stragglers remained.

The planting of the colony was the effect of religious principle. The Revolution was the fruit of another principle — the devouring thirst for justice.

On the 27th June, near three hundred persons, upwards of twenty-one years of age, inhabitants of Concord, entered into a covenant, 'solemnly engaging with each other, in the presence of God, to suspend all commercial intercourse with Great Britain, until the act for blocking the harbor of Boston be repealed; and neither to buy nor consume any merchandise imported from Great Britain, nor to deal with those who do.'

In August, a County Convention met in this town, to deliberate upon the alarming state of public affairs, and published an admirable report. In September, incensed at the new royal law which made the judges dependent on the crown, the inhabitants assembled

on the common, and forbade the justices to open the court of sessions. This little town then assumed the sovereignty. It was judge and jury and council and king. On the 26th of the month, the whole town resolved itself into a committee of safety, 'to suppress all riots, tumults, and disorders in said town, and to aid all untainted magistrates in the execution of the laws of the land.' It was then voted, to raise one or more companies of minute-men, by enlistment, to be paid by the town whenever called out of town; and to provide arms and ammunition, 'that those who are unable to purchase them themselves, may have the advantage of them, if necessity calls for it.' In October, the Provincial Congress met in Concord. John Hancock was President. This body was composed of the foremost patriots, and adopted those efficient measures whose progress and issue belong to the history of the nation.

The clergy of New England were, for the most part, zealous promoters of the Revolution. A deep religious sentiment sanctified the thirst for liberty. All the military movements in this town were solemnized by acts of public worship. In January, 1775, a meeting was held for the enlisting of minute-men. Reverend William Emerson, the chaplain of the Provincial Congress, preached to the people. Sixty men enlisted and, in a few days, many more. On 13th March, at a general review of all the military companies, he preached to a very full assembly, taking for his text, 2 Chronicles XIII. 12, 'And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding

trumpets to cry alarm against you.' It is said that all the services of that day made a deep impression on the people, even to the singing of the psalm.

A large amount of military stores had been deposited in this town, by order of the Provincial Committee of Safety. It was to destroy those stores that the troops who were attacked in this town, on the 19th April, 1775, were sent hither by General Gage.

The story of that day is well known. In these peaceful fields, for the first time since a hundred years, the drum and alarm-gun were heard, and the farmers snatched down their rusty firelocks from the kitchen walls, to make good the resolute words of their town debates. In the field where the western abutment of the old bridge may still be seen, about half a mile from this spot, the first organized resistance was made to the British arms.

In all the anecdotes of that day's events we may discern the natural action of the people. It was not an extravagant ebullition of feeling, but might have been calculated on by any one acquainted with the spirits and habits of our community. Those poor farmers who came up, that day, to defend their native soil, acted from the simplest instincts. They did not know it was a deed of fame they were doing. These men did not babble of glory. They never dreamed their children would contend who had done the most. They supposed they had a right to their corn and their cattle, without paying tribute to any but their own governors. And as they had no fear of man, they yet did have a fear of God. Captain Charles Miles, who

was wounded in the pursuit of the enemy, told my venerable friend who sits by me, that 'he went to the services of that day, with the same seriousness and acknowledgment of God, which he carried to church.'

I have read with care the Town Records themselves. They must ever be the fountains of all just information respecting your character and customs. They are the history of the town. They exhibit a pleasing picture of a community almost exclusively agricultural, where no man has much time for words, in his search after things; of a community of great simplicity of manners, and of a manifest love of justice. For the most part, the town has deserved the name it wears. I find our annals marked with a uniform good sense. I find no ridiculous laws, no eavesdropping legislators, no hanging of witches, no ghosts, no whipping of Quakers, no unnatural crimes. The tone of the Records rises with the dignity of the event. These soiled and musty books are luminous and electric within.

I feel some unwillingness to quit the remembrance of the past. With all the hope of the new I feel that we are leaving the old. Every moment carries us farther from the two great epochs of public principle, the Planting, and the Revolution of the colony. Fortunate and favored this town has been, in having received so large an infusion of the spirit of both of those periods. Humble as is our village in the circle of later and prouder towns that whiten the land, it has been consecrated by the presence and activity of the purest men.

The merit of those who fill a space in the world's history, who are borne forward, as it were, by the weight of thousands whom they lead, sheds a perfume less sweet than do the sacrifices of private virtue. I have had much opportunity of access to anecdotes of families, and I believe this town to have been the dwelling-place, in all times since its planting, of pious and excellent persons, who walked meekly through the paths of common life, who served God, and loved man, and never let go the hope of immortality. The benediction of their prayers and of their principles lingers around us. The acknowledgment of the Supreme Being exalts the history of this people. It brought the fathers hither. In a war of principle, it delivered their sons. And so long as a spark of this faith survives among the children's children, so long shall the name of Concord be honest and venerable.

CONCORD HYMN

SUNG AT THE COMPLETION OF THE BATTLE MONUMENT
July 4, 1837

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
  Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
  And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
  Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
  Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
  We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
  When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
  To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
  The shaft we raise to them and thee.

CHAPTER II

DRUM-BEATS

(*April* 19, 1867)

THE day is in Concord doubly our calendar day, as being the anniversary of the invasion of the town by the British troops in 1775, and of the departure of the company of volunteers in 1861.

The town has thought fit to signify its honor for a few of its sons by raising an obelisk in the square. It is a simple pile enough — a few slabs of granite, dug just below the surface of the soil, and laid upon the top of it; but as we have learned that the upheaved mountain, from which these discs or flakes were broken, was once a glowing mass at white heat, slowly crystallized, then uplifted by the central fires of the globe: so the roots of the events it appropriately marks are in the heart of the universe. I shall say of this obelisk, planted here in our quiet plains, what Richter says of the volcano in the fair landscape of Naples: 'Vesuvius stands in this poem of Nature, and exalts everything, as war does the age.'

The art of the architect and the sense of the town have made these dumb stones speak; have, if I may borrow the old language of the church, converted these elements from a secular to a sacred and spiritual use; have made them look to the past and the future; have given them a meaning for the imagination and the heart. The sense of the town, the eloquent in-

scriptions the shaft now bears, the memories of these martyrs, the noble names which yet have gathered only their first fame, whatever good grows to the country out of the war, the largest results, the future power and genius of the land, will go on clothing this shaft with daily beauty and spiritual life. 'Tis certain that a plain stone like this, standing on such memories, having no reference to utilities, but only to the grand instincts of the civil and moral man, mixes with surrounding nature — by day with the changing seasons, by night the stars roll over it gladly — becomes a sentiment, a poet, a prophet, an orator, to every townsman and passenger, an altar where the noble youth shall in all time come to make his secret vows.

The old Monument, a short half-mile from this house, stands to signalize the first Revolution, where the people resisted offensive usurpations, offensive taxes of the British Parliament, claiming that there should be no tax without representation.

This new Monument is built to mark the arrival of the nation at the new principle — say, rather, at its new acknowledgment, for the principle is as old as Heaven — that only that state can live, in which injury to the least member is recognized as damage to the whole.

Every principle is a war-note. When the rights of man are recited under any old government, every one of them is a declaration of war. War civilizes, rearranges the population, distributing by ideas — the innovators on one side, the antiquaries on the other.

It opens the eyes wider. Once we were patriots up to the town-bounds, or the state-line. But when you replace the love of family or clan by a principle, as freedom, instantly that fire runs over the state-line into New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and Ohio, into the prairie and beyond, leaps the mountains, bridges river and lake, burns as hotly in Kansas and California as in Boston, and no chemist can discriminate between one soil and the other. It lifts every population to an equal power and merit.

The war made the Divine Providence credible to many who did not believe the good Heaven quite honest. Every man was an abolitionist by conviction, but did not believe that his neighbor was. The opinions of masses of men, which the tactics of primary caucuses and the proverbial timidity of trade had concealed, the war discovered; and it was found, contrary to all popular belief, that the country was at heart abolitionist, and for the Union was ready to die.

As cities of men are the first effects of civilization, and also instantly causes of more civilization, so armies, which are only wandering cities, generate a vast heat, and lift the spirit of the soldiers who compose them to the boiling point. The armies mustered in the North were as much missionaries to the mind of the country as they were carriers of material force, and had the vast advantage of carrying whither they marched a higher civilization.

The obelisk records only the names of the dead. There is something partial in this distribution of honor. Those who went through those dreadful fields

and returned not deserve much more than all the honor we can pay. But those also who went through the same fields, and returned alive, put just as much at hazard as those who died, and, in other countries, would wear distinctive badges of honor as long as they lived. I hope the disuse of such medals or badges in this country only signifies that everybody knows these men, and carries their deeds in such lively remembrance that they require no badge or reminder. I am sure I need not bespeak your gratitude to these fellow citizens and neighbors of ours. I hope they will be content with the laurels of one war.

But let me, in behalf of this assembly, speak directly to you, our defenders, and say, that it is easy to see that if danger should ever threaten the homes which you guard, the knowledge of your presence will be a wall of fire for their protection. Brave men! you will hardly be called to see again fields as terrible as those you have already trampled with your victories.

There are people who can hardly read the names on yonder bronze tablet, the mist so gathers in their eyes. Three of the names are of sons of one family. A gloom gathers on this assembly, composed as it is of kindred men and women, for, in many houses, the dearest and noblest is gone from their hearthstone. Yet it is tinged with light from heaven. A duty so severe has been discharged, and with such immense results of good, lifting private sacrifice to the sublime, that, though the cannon volleys have a sound of funeral

echoes, they can yet hear through them the benedictions of their country and mankind.

. . . . . .

The war is a new glass to see all our old things through, how they look. We will not again disparage America, now that we have seen what men it will bear.

I wish that war, as peace, shall bring out the genius of men. In every company, in every town, I seek intellect and character, and so in every circumstance. War, I know, is a potent alternative, tonic, magnetizer, reinforces manly power a hundred and a thousand times. I see it come as a frosty October, which shall restore intellectual and moral power to these languid and dissipated populations.

What munificence has the war disclosed! How a sentiment could unclasp the grasp of avarice 'and painfullest economy.'

It has created patriotism. War sharpens the eyes, opens the mind of the people.

What a new face courage puts on everything! A determined man, by his very attitude and the tone of his voice, puts a stop to defeat, and begins to conquer. 'For they can conquer who believe they can.' Every one hears gladly that cheerful voice. He reveals to us the enormous power of one man over masses of men; that one man whose eye commands the end in view and the means by which it can be attained, is not only better than ten men or a hundred men, but victor over all mankind who do not see the issue and the means. One fact that shines through all this plenti-

tude of powers is, that as is the receiver, so is the gift; that all these acquisitions are victories of the good brain and brave heart; that the world belongs to the energetic, belongs to the wise. It is in vain to make a paradise for good men. The tropics are one vast garden; yet man is more miserably fed and conditioned there than in the cold and stingy zones. The healthy, the civil, the industrious, the learned, the moral race — Nature herself only yields her secret to these. And the resources of America and its future will be immense only to wise and virtuous men.

What is the meaning of this invincible respect for war here in the triumphs of our commercial civilization, that we can never quite smother the trumpet and drum? How is it that the sword runs away with all the fame from the spade and the wheel? Why, but because courage never loses its high price? Why, but because we wish to see those to whom existence is most adorned and attractive foremost to peril it for their object, and ready to answer for their actions with their life?

And so I look on those sentiments which make the glory of the human being, love, humility, faith, as being also the intimacy of Divinity in the atoms; and that as soon as the man is right, assurances and previsions emanate from the interior of his body and his mind; as when flowers reach their ripeness, incense exhales from them, and as a beautiful atmosphere is generated from the planet by the averaged emanations from all its rocks and soils.

Thus man is made equal to any event. He can face

danger for the right. A poor, tender, painful body, he can run into flame or bullets or pestilence, with duty for his guide. He feels the insurance of a just employment. I am not afraid of accident as long as I am in my place. — Every man's work is his life-preserver. The conviction that his work is dear to God and cannot be spared, defends him.

Riches and poverty are a thick or thin costume; and our life — the life of all of us — is identical. For we transcend the circumstance continually and taste the real quality of existence; as in our employments which only differ in the manifestations but express the same laws; or in our thoughts, which wear no silks and taste no ice-creams. We see God face to face every hour, and know the savor of nature. There is no chance and no anarchy in the universe. All is system and gradation.

The cause of peace is not the cause of cowardice. If peace be sought to be defended or preserved for the safety of the luxurious and the timid, it is a sham, and the peace will be base. War is better, and the peace will be broken. If peace is to be maintained, it must be by brave men, who have come up to the same height as the hero, namely, the will to carry their life in their hand, and stake it at any instant for their principle, but who have gone one step beyond the hero, and will not seek another man's life; — men who have, by their intellectual insight or else by their moral elevation, attained such a perception of their own intrinsic worth, that they do not think property of their own body a sufficient good to be saved by

such dereliction of principle as treating a man like a sheep.

The proposition of the Congress of Nations is undoubtedly that at which the present course of events do point. But the mind, once prepared for the reign of principles, will easily find modes for expressing its will. There is the highest fitness in the place and time in which this enterprise is begun. Not in an obscure corner, not in feudal Europe, not in an antiquated appanage where no onward step can be taken without rebellion, is this seed of benevolence laid in the furrow, with tears of hope; but in this broad America of God and man, where the forest is only now falling, or yet to fall, and the green earth opened to the inundation of emigrant men from all quarters of oppression and guilt; here, where not a family, not a few men, but mankind, shall say what shall be; here, we ask, Shall it be War, or shall it be Peace?

CHAPTER III

THE FARMER'S TREASURE

THE town of Concord is one of the oldest towns in this country, far on now in its third century. The selectmen have once in every five years perambulated the boundaries, and yet, in this very year, a large quantity of land has been discovered and added to the town without a murmur of complaint from any quarter. By drainage we went down to a subsoil we did not know, and have found there a Concord under old Concord, which we are now getting the best crops from; a Middlesex under Middlesex; and, in fine, that Massachusetts has a basement story more valuable and that promises to pay better rent than all the superstructure. But these titles have acquired by association a new interest. These titles are political economists, confuters of Malthus and Ricardo; they are so many Young Americans announcing a better era — more bread. They drain the land, make it sweet and friable; have made English Chat Moss a garden, and will now do as much for the Dismal Swamp. But beyond this benefit they are the text of better opinions and better auguries for mankind.

We cannot enumerate the incidents and agents of the farm without reverting to their influence on the farmer. He carries out this cumulative preparation of means to their last effect. This crust of soil which ages have refined he refines again for the feeding of a civil

and instructed people. The great elements with which he deals cannot leave him unaffected, or unconscious of his ministry; but their influence somewhat resembles that which the same Nature has on the child — of subduing and silencing him. We see the farmer with respect when we think what powers and utilities are so meekly worn. He knows every secret of labor; he changes the face of the landscape. Put him on a new planet and he would know where to begin; yet there is no arrogance in his bearing but a perfect gentleness. The farmer stands well on the world. Plain in manners and dress, he would not shine in palaces; he is absolutely unknown and inadmissible therein; yet the drawing-room heroes put down beside him would shrivel in his presence; he solid and unexpressive, they expressed to gold-leaf. But he stands well on the world — as Adam did, as an Indian does, as Homer's heroes, Agamemnon or Achilles, do. He is a person whom a poet of any clime — Milton, Firdusi, or Cervantes — would appreciate as being really a piece of the old Nature, comparable to sun and moon, rainbow and flood; because he is, as all natural persons are, representative of Nature as much as these.

When I bought my farm, I did not know what a bargain I had in the bluebirds, bobolinks and thrushes, which were not charged in the bill; as little did I guess what sublime mornings and sunsets I was buying — what reaches of landscape, and what fields and lanes for a tramp. Neither did I fully consider what an indescribable luxury is our Indian river, the Musketaquid — which runs parallel with the village street and

to which every house on that long street has a back door, which leads down through the garden to the river-bank, when a skiff, or a dory, gives you, all summer, access to enchantments, new every day, and all winter, to miles of ice for the skater. And because our river is no Hudson or Mississippi I have a problem long waiting for an engineer — this — to what height I must build a tower in my garden that shall show me the Atlantic Ocean from its top — the ocean twenty miles away.

Still less did I know what good and true neighbors I was buying, men of thought and virtue, some of them now known the country through for their learning, or subtlety, or active or patriotic power, but whom I had the pleasure of knowing long before the Country did; and of other men not known widely but known at home, farmers — not doctors of laws, but doctors of land, skilled in turning a swamp or a sand-bank into a fruitful field, and, where witch-grass and nettles grew, causing a forest of apple-trees or miles of corn and rye to thrive.

I did not know what groups of interesting school-boys and fair school-girls were to greet me in the high-way, and to take hold of one's heart at the School Exhibitions.

This town has no seaport, no cotton, no shoe trade, no water-power, no gold, lead, coal or rock oil, no marble; nothing but wood and grass, not even ice and granite, our New England staples, for the granite is better in Acton and Fitchburg, and our ice, Mr. R. Tudor said, had bubbles in it. We are reduced then to

manufacture school-teachers, which we do for the southern and western market. I advise the town to stick to that staple and make it the best in the world. It is your lot in the urn; and it is one of the commanding lots. Get the best apparatus, the best overseer, and turn out the best possible article. Mr. Agassiz says, 'I mean to make the Harvard Museum such that no European naturalist can afford to stay away from it.' Let the town of Concord say as much for its school. We will make our schools such that no family which has a new home to choose can fail to be attracted hither as to the one town in which the best education can be secured. This is one of those long prospective economies which is sure and remunerative.

'Little joy has he who has no garden,' said Saadi. Montaigne took much pains to be made a citizen of Rome; and our people are vain, when abroad, of having the freedom of foreign cities presented to them in a gold box. I much prefer to have the freedom of a garden presented me. When I go into a good garden, I think, if it were mine, I should never go out of it. It requires some geometry in the head to lay it out rightly, and there are many who can enjoy to one that can create it.

Without going into the proud niceties of an European garden, there is happiness all the year round to be had from the square fruit-gardens which we plant in the front or rear of every farmhouse. In the orchard, we build monuments to Van Mons annually.

The place where a thoughtful man in the country

feels the joy of eminent domain is in his wood-lot. If he suffers from accident or low spirits, his spirits rise when he enters it. He can spend the entire day therein, with hatchet or pruning-shears, making paths, without remorse of wasting time. He can fancy that the birds know him and trust him, and even the trees make little speeches or hint them.

Horses and carriages are costly toys, but the word park always charms me. I could not find it in my heart to chide the citizen who should ruin himself to buy a patch of heavy oak timber. I admire the taste which makes the avenue to the house — were the house never so small — through a wood; — as it disposes the mind of the inhabitant and of his guest to the deference due to each.

With brow bent, with firm intent, I go musing in the garden walk. I stoop to pull up a weed that is choking the corn, and find that there are two; close behind is a third, and I reach out my arm to a fourth; behind that there are four thousand and one. I am heated and untuned, and by and by wake up from my idiot dream of chickweed and red-root, to find that I with adamantine purposes am chickweed and piper-grass myself.

In an evil hour I pulled down my fence and added Warren's piece to mine; no land is bad, but land is worse. If a man own land, the land owns him. Now let him leave home if he dare! Every tree and graft, every hill of melons, every row of corn, every hedge-shrub, all he has done and all he means to do stand in his way, like duns, when he so much as turns his back

on his house. Then the devotion to these vines and trees and corn hills I find narrowing and poisonous. I delight in long, free walks. These free my brain and serve my body. Long marches would be no hardship to me. My frame is fit for them. I think I could compose easily so. But these stoopings and scrapings and fingerings in a few square yards of garden are dispiriting, drivelling, and I seem to have eaten lotus, to be robbed of all energy, and I have a sort of catalepsy or unwillingness to move, and have grown peevish and poor-spirited.

There are two companions, with one or other of whom 'tis desirable to go out on a tramp. One is an artist, that is, who has an eye for beauty. If you use a good and skilful companion, you shall see through his eyes; and, if they be of great discernment, you will learn wonderful secrets. In walking with Allston, you shall see what was never before shown to the eye of man. And as the perception of beauty always exhilarates, if one is so happy as to find the company of a true artist, he is a perpetual holiday and benefactor, and ought only to be used like an oriflamme or a garland, for feasts and May-days, and parliaments of wit and love.

The other is a naturalist, for the reason that it is much better to learn the elements of geology, of botany, or ornithology and astronomy by word of mouth from a companion than dully from a book. There is so much, too, which a book cannot teach which an old friend can. A man should carry Nature in his head — should know the hour of the day or

night, and the time of the year, by the sun and stars; should know the solstice and the equinox, the quarter of the moon and the daily tides.

The countryman, as I said, has more than he paid for; the landscape is his. I am sorry to say the farmers seldom walk for pleasure. It is a fine art; — there are degrees of proficiency, and we distinguish the professors of that science from the apprentices. But there is a manifest increase in the taste for it. 'Tis the consolation of mortal men. It is an old saying that physicians or naturalists are the only professional men who continue their tasks out of study-hours; and the naturalist has no barren places, no winter, and no night, pursuing his researches in the sea, in the ground, in barren moors, in the night even, because the woods exhibit a whole new world of nocturnal animals; in winter, because, remove the snow a little, a multitude of plants live and grow, and there is a perpetual push of buds, so that it is impossible to say when vegetation begins. I think no pursuit has more breath of immortality in it.

I admire in trees the creation of property so clean of tears, or crime, or even care. No lesson of chemistry is more impressive to me than this chemical fact that 'Nineteen twentieths of the timber are drawn from the atmosphere.' We knew the root was sucking juices from the ground. But the top of the tree is also a tap-root thrust into the public pocket of the atmosphere. This is a highwayman, to be sure. And I am always glad to remember that in proportion to the foliation is the addition of wood. Then they grow,

when you wake and when you sleep, at nobody's cost, and for everybody's comfort. Lord Abercorn, when some one praised the rapid growth of his trees, replied, 'Sir, they have nothing else to do!'

That uncorrupted behavior which we admire in the animals, and in young children, belongs also to the farmer, the hunter, the sailor, the man who lives in the presence of Nature. Cities force the growth and make him talkative and entertaining, but they make him artificial. What alone possesses interest for us is the naturel of each, that which is constitutional to him only. This is forever a surprise, and engaging, and lovely; we can't be satiated with knowing it, and about it, and this is that which the conversation with Nature goes to cherish and to guard.

CHAPTER IV

THE OPENING OF THE CONCORD LIBRARY

That town is attractive to its native citizens and to immigrants which has a healthy site, good land, good roads, good sidewalks, a good hotel; still more, if it have an adequate town hall, good churches, good preachers, good schools, and if it avail itself of the Act of the Legislature authorizing towns to tax themselves for the establishment of a public library. Happier, if it contain citizens who cannot wait for the slow growth of the population to make these advantages adequate to the desires of the people, but make costly gifts to education, civility and culture, as in the act we are met to witness and acknowledge to-day.

I think we cannot easily overestimate the benefit conferred. In the details of this munificence, we may all anticipate a sudden and lasting prosperity to this ancient town, in the benefit of a noble library, which adds by the beauty of the building, and its skilful arrangement, a quite new attraction — making readers of those who are not readers — making scholars of those who only read newspapers or novels until now; and whilst it secures a new and needed culture to our citizens, offering a strong attraction to strangers who are seeking a country home to sit down here. And I am not sure that when Boston learns the good deed of Mr. Munroe, it will not be a little envious, nor rest until it has annexed Concord to the city. Our founder

has followed the many admirable examples which have lately honored the country, of benefactors who have not waited to bequeath colleges and hospitals, but have themselves built them, reminding us of Sir Isaac Newton's saying, 'that they who give nothing before their death, never in fact give at all.'

I think it is not easy to exaggerate the utility of the beneficence which takes this form. If you consider what has befallen you when reading a poem, or a history, or a tragedy, or a novel, even, that deeply interested you — how you forgot the time of day, the persons sitting in the room, and the engagements for the evening, you will easily admit the wonderful property of books to make all towns equal: that Concord Library makes Concord as good as Rome, Paris or London, for the hour; — has the best of each of those cities in itself. Robinson Crusoe, could he have had a shelf of our books, could almost have done without his man Friday, or even the arriving ship.

The chairman of Mr. Munroe's trustees has told you how old is the foundation of our village library, and we think we can trace in our modest records a correspondent effect of culture amidst our citizens. A deep religious sentiment is, in all times, an inspirer of the intellect, and that was not wanting here. The town was settled by a pious company of nonconformists from England, and the printed books of their pastor and leader, Reverend Peter Bulkeley, sometime fellow of Saint John's College in Cambridge, England, testify the ardent sentiment which they shared.

Henry Thoreau we all remember as a man of genius, and of marked character, known to our farmers as the most skilful of surveyors, and indeed better acquainted with their forests and meadows and trees than themselves, but more widely known as the writer of some of the best books which have been written in this country, and which, I am persuaded, have not yet gathered half their fame. He, too, was an excellent reader. No man would have rejoiced more than he in the event of this day. In a private letter to a lady, he writes, 'Do you read any noble verses? For my part, they have been the only things I remembered — or that which occasioned them — when all things else were blurred and defaced. All things have put on mourning but they: for the elegy itself is some victorious melody in you, escaping from the wreck. It is a relief to read some true books wherein all are equally alive. I think the best parts of Shakspeare would only be enhanced by the most thrilling and affecting events. I have found it so: and all the more, that they are not intended for consolation.'

Nathaniel Hawthorne's residence in the Manse gave new interest to that house whose windows overlooked the retreat of the British soldiers in 1775, and his careful studies of Concord life and history are known wherever the English language is spoken.

I know the word literature has in many ears a hollow sound. It is thought to be the harmless entertainment of a few fanciful persons, and not at all to be the interest of the multitude. To these objections,

which proceed on the cheap notion that nothing but what grinds corn, roasts mutton, and weaves cotton, is anything worth, I have little to say. There are utilitarians who prefer that Jesus should have wrought as a carpenter, and Saint Paul as a tent-maker. But literature is the record of the best thoughts. Every attainment and discipline which increases a man's acquaintance with the invisible world lifts his being. Everything that gives him a new perception of beauty multiplies his pure enjoyments. A river of thought is always running out of the invisible world into the mind of man. Shall not they who received the largest streams spread abroad the healing waters?

It was the symbolical custom of the ancient Mexican priests, after the annual extinction of the household fires of their land, to procure in the temple fire from the sun, and thence distribute it as a sacred gift to every hearth in the nation. It is a just type of the service rendered to mankind by wise men. Homer and Plato and Pindar and Shakspeare serve many more than have heard their names. Thought is the most volatile of all things. It cannot be contained in any cup, though you shut the lid never so tight. Once brought into the world, it runs over the vessel which received it into all minds that love it. The very language we speak thinks for us by the subtle distinctions which already are marked for us by its words, and every one of these is the contribution of the wit of one and another sagacious man in all the centuries of time.

Consider that it is our own state of mind at any

time that makes our estimate of life and the world. If you sprain your foot, you will presently come to think that Nature has sprained hers. Everything begins to look so slow and inaccessible. And when you sprain your mind, by gloomy reflection on your failures and vexations, you come to have a bad opinion of life. Think how indigent Nature must appear to the blind, the deaf, and the idiot. Now if you can kindle the imagination by a new thought, by heroic histories, by uplifting poetry, instantly you expand — are cheered, inspired, and become wise, and even prophetic. Music works this miracle for those who have a good ear; what omniscience has music! so absolutely impersonal, and yet every sufferer feels his secret sorrow reached. Yet to a scholar the book is as good or better. There is no hour of vexation which on a little reflection will not find diversion and relief in the library. His companions are few: at the moment, he has none: but, year by year, these silent friends supply their place. Many times the reading of a book has made the fortune of the man — has decided his way of life. It makes friends. 'Tis a tie between men to have been delighted with the same book.

In books I have the history or the energy of the past. Angels they are to us of entertainment, sympathy and provocation. With them many of us spend the most of our life — these silent guides — these tractable prophets, historians, and singers, whose embalmed life is the highest feat of art; who now cast their moonlight illumination over solitude, weariness and fallen fortunes. You say, 'tis a languid pleasure.

Yes, but its tractableness, coming and going like a dog at our bidding, compensates the quietness, and contrasts with the slowness of fortune and the inaccessibleness of persons.

You meet with a man of science, a good thinker or good wit, — but you do not know how to draw out of him that which he knows. But the book is a sure friend, always ready at your first leisure — opens to the very page you desire, and shuts at your first fatigue — as possibly your professor might not.

In saying these things for books, I do not for a moment forget that they are secondary, mere means, and only used in the off-hours, only in the pause, and, as it were, the sleep, or passive state of the mind. The intellect reserves all its rights. Instantly, when the mind itself wakes, all books, all past acts are forgotten, huddled aside as impertinent in the august presence of the creator. Their costliest benefit is that they set us free from themselves; for they wake the imagination and the sentiment — and in their inspirations we dispense with books. Let me add then — read proudly; put the duty of being read invariably on the author. If he is not read, whose fault is it? I am quite ready to be charmed — but I shall not make believe I am charmed.

But there is no end to the praise of books, to the value of the library. Who shall estimate their influence on our population where all the millions read and write? It is the joy of nations that man can communicate all his thoughts, discoveries and virtues to records that may last for centuries.

But I am pleading a cause which in the event of this day has already won: and I am happy in the assurance that the whole assembly to whom I speak entirely sympathize in the feeling of this town in regard to the new Library, and its honored Founder.

Emerson's words spoken at the opening of the Library in 1873, were happily supplemented forty years later, by those of Mr. Story, who said at the unveiling of the inspiring statue of Emerson, a work of art by Daniel Chester French, which seems to radiate the spirit of its subject throughout the edifice, where it remains a central figure, seated in serene meditation:

'It is fitting that the statue of Mr. Emerson should find its place here among the books which he loved and taught us to love, in this town which was his home. Men's minds are confused, and it is a time when Mr. Emerson's clear vision, his high faith, his unfailing serenity are needed to lift us up and fill us with fresh courage. The spirit which we lack shines in his sculptured face.'

THE RHODORA

(On being asked, whence is the flower?)

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the ages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask, I never knew:
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me there brought
you.

CHAPTER V

THE CONCORD LANDSCAPE

WHAT is more alive among works of art than our plain old wooden church, built a century and a quarter ago, with the ancient New England spire. I pass it at night and stand and listen to the beats of the clock like heart-beats; not sounding, as Elizabeth Hoar well observed, so much like tickings, as like a step. It is the step of Time. You catch the sound first by looking at the clock face. And then you see this wooden tower rising thus alone, but stable and aged, toward the midnight stars. It has affiance and privilege with them. Not less than the marble cathedral it had its origin in sublime aspirations, in the august religion of man. Not less than those stars to which it points, it began in the soul.

At church to-day I felt how unequal is this match of words against things. Cease, O thou unauthorized talker, to prate of consolation, and resignation, and spiritual joys, in neat and balanced sentences. For I know these men who sit below, and on the hearing of these *words* look up. Hush quickly! For care and calamity are *things* to them. . . . O speak things, then, or hold thy tongue.

I delight in our pretty church music and to hear that poor slip of a girl, without education, without thought, yet show this fine instinct in her singing, so that every note of her song sounds to me like an ad-

venture and a victory in the 'tonwelt,' and whilst all the choir beside stay fast by their leader and the bass-viol, this angel voice goes choosing, choosing, choosing on, and with the precision of genius keeps its faithful road and floods the house with melody.

Last night at ten, I left my dreamy journal and went abroad to receive the fair inscription of night. The moon was making amber of the world. Every cottage pane glittered into silver. The trees were beautiful yet ominous with gloom. The meadows sent up the rank smells of all their ferns and grasses and folded flowers into a nocturnal fragrance. The little harlot flies of the lowlands sparkled in the grass and in the air. It is all music. Then we see that Martin's Creation picture was true, and that the man who has seen the moon break out of clouds at night, arising, has been present, like an archangel, at the creation of light and of the world; and that he who has been in love has assisted at a new and second morning; that he in whose soul art has been born has seen a greater day; and finally (where indeed there is no final), he who has through weary experience of sweet and smart in life attained to know character, and to worship that slow, secular, divine product, has beheld a worthier creation, that great day of the feast.

I am sometimes discontented with my house, because it lies on a dusty road and with its sills and cellar almost in the water of the meadow. But when I creep out of it into the night or the morning and see what majestic and what tender beauties daily wrap

HOUSE OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON

me in their bosom, how near to me is every transcendent secret of Nature's love and religion, I see how indifferent it is where I eat and sleep. This very street of hucksters and taverns the moon will transform into a Palmyra, for she is the apologist of all apologists and will kiss the elm-trees alone, and hides every meanness in a silver-edged darkness. Then the good river god has taken the form of my valiant Henry Thoreau here, and introduced me to the riches of his shadowy starlit, moonlit stream, a lovely new world lying as close and yet as unknown to this vulgar trite one of streets and shops, as death to life, or poetry to prose.

Through one field we went to the boat, and then left all time, all science, all history behind us and entered into nature with one stroke of a paddle. Take care, good friend! I said as I looked West into the sunset overhead and underneath, and he with his face towards me, rowed towards it — Take care: you know not what you do, dipping your wooden oar into this enchanted liquid, painted with all reds and purples and yellows, which glows under and behind you. Presently this glory faded and the stars came and he said, 'Here we are . . .' These beguiling stars, soothsaying, flattering, persuading, who, though their promise was never yet made good in human experience, are not to be contradicted, not to be insulted, nay, not even to be disbelieved by us. All experience is against them, yet their word is Hope and shall still forever leave experience a liar.

Another walk with Ellery Channing, and well

worth commemoration, if that were possible; but no pen could write what we saw; it needs the pencils of all the painters that ever existed to aid the description. We went to White Pond, a pretty little Indian bath, lonely now as Walden once was; we could almost see the sachem in his canoe in a shadowy cove. Making the circuit of the lake, on the shore, we came at last to see some marvellous reflections of the colored woods in the water, of such singular beauty and novelty that they held us fast to the spot, almost to the going down of the sun; and the submarine wood seemed all made of Lombardy poplar, with such delicious green, stained by gleams of mahogany from the oaks, and streaks of white from the birches — every moment growing more excellent. It was the world seen through a prism, and set Ellery on wonderful Lucretian theories of 'law and design.' For how many ages of lovely days has that pretty wilderness of White Pond received the sun and clouds into its transparencies, and woven each day new webs of birch and pine — shooting into wilder angles and more fantastic crossings of these coarse threads, which in the water, have such momentary elegance.

Yesterday, the best day of the year, we spent in the afternoon on the river. A sky of Calcutta; light, air, clouds, water, banks, birds, grass, pads, lilies, were in perfection, and it was delicious to live. Ellery and I went up the South Branch, and took a bath from the bank behind Cyrus Hubbard's, where the river makes a bend. Black-birds in hundreds; swallows in tens sitting on telegraph lines; and one heron (ardea

minor) assisted. In these perfect pictures, one thinks what weary nonsense is all this painful collection of rubbish — pictures of rubbish masters — in the total neglect of this and ever lovely river valley, where the multitudinous life and beauty make these pictures ridiculous, cold chalk and acro.

Fine walk yesterday with Ellery to Estabrook Farm. Finest day in the year, and best road, almost all the way 'through lots.' Birds singing, got over their summer silence, sunlight full of gnats; crickets in full cry; goldfinches (carduelis) on the thistle eating the seed, scattering the leaves; boulder field; Cooper's hawk; rock of Sinai, all books and tables of law; wonderful hedges, barberry, apple, whitethorn; the brook through the wood; benzoin, the big birch. Largeness of the estate; nobody can buy. . . . A cornucopia of golden joys.

By Latin and English poetry, I was born and bred in an oratorio of praises of nature, flowers, birds and mountains; sun and moon, and now I find I know nothing of any of these fine things, that I have conversed with the merest surface and show of them all; and of their essence or their history know nothing. Now, furthermore, I melancholy discover that nobody — that not these chanting poets themselves — know anything sincere of these handsome natures they so commended; that they contented themselves with the passing chirp of a bird or saw his spread wing in the sun as he fluttered by, they saw one morning or two in their lives, and listlessly looked at sunsets and repeated idly these few glimpses in their song.

But if I go into the forest, I find all new and undescribed; nothing has been told me. The screaming of wild geese was never heard; the thin note of the titmouse and his bold ignoring of the bystander; the fall of the flies that patter on the leaves like rain; the angry hiss of some bird that crepitated at me yesterday; the formation of turpentine, and indeed any vegetation and animation, any and all are alike undescribed. Every man that goes into the woods seems to be the first man that ever went into a wood. His sensations and his world are new. You really think that nothing can be said about morning and evening, and the fact is, morning and evening have not yet begun to be described.

When I see them I am *not* reminded of these Homeric or Miltonic or Shakspearean or Chaucerian pictures, but I feel a pain of an alien world, or I am cheered with the moist, warm, glittering, budding and melodious hour that takes down the narrow walls of my soul and extends its pulsation and life to the very horizon. That is morning; to cease for a bright hour to be a prisoner of this sickly body and to become as large as the World.

There are days when the great are near us, when there is no frown on their brow, no condescension even; when they take us by the hand, and we share their thought. There are days which are the carnival of the year. The angels assume flesh, and repeatedly become visible. The imagination of the gods is excited and rushes on every side into forms. Yesterday not a bird peeped; the world was barren, peaked and

pining: to-day 'tis inconceivably populous; creation swarms and meliorates.

The days are made on a loom whereof the warp and woof are past and future time. They are majestically dressed, as if every god brought a thread to the sky web. 'Tis pitiful the things by which we are rich or poor — a matter of coins, coats and carpets, a little more or less stone, or wood, or paint, the fashion of a cloak or hat; like the luck of naked Indians, of whom one is proud in the possession of a glass bead or a red feather, the rest miserable in the want of it.

But the treasures which Nature spent itself to amass — the secular, refined, composite anatomy of man, which all strata go to form, which the prior races, from infusory and saurian, existed to ripen; the surrounding plastic natures; the earth with its foods; the intellectual, temperament in air, the sea with its invitations; the heaven deep with worlds; the answering brain and nervous structure replying to these; the eye that looketh into the deeps, which again look back to the eye, abyss to abyss; — these, not like a glass bead, or the coins or carpets, are given immeasurably to all.

This miracle is hurled into every beggar's hands. The blue sky is a covering for a market and for the cherubim and seraphim. The sky is the varnish or glory with which the Artist has washed the whole work — the verge or confines of matter and spirit. Nature could no farther go. Could our happiest dream come to pass in solid fact — could a power open our eyes to behold 'millions of spiritual crea-

tures walk the earth,' I believe I should find that mid-plain on which they moved floored beneath and arched above with the same web of blue depth which weaves itself over me now, as I trudge the streets on my affairs.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONSECRATION OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

(*September* 29, 1855)

THE committee to whom was confided the charge of carrying out the wishes of the town in opening the cemetery, having proceeded so far as to enclose the ground, and cut the necessary roads, and having laid off as many lots as are likely to be wanted at present, have thought it fit to call the inhabitants together, to show you the ground, now that the new avenues make its advantages appear; and to put it at your disposition.

They have thought that the taking possession of this field ought to be marked by a public meeting and religious rites: and they have requested me to say a few words which the serious and tender occasion inspires.

We give our earth to earth. We will not jealously guard a few atoms under immense marbles, selfishly and impossibly sequestering it from the vast circulations of Nature, but, at the same time, fully admitting the divine hope and love which belong to our nature, wishing to make one spot tender to our children, who shall come hither in the next century to read the dates of these lives.

Our people accepting this lesson from science, yet touched by the tenderness which Christianity breathes, have found a mean in the consecration of gardens. A simultaneous movement has, in a hundred cities and towns in this country, selected some convenient piece

of undulating ground with pleasant woods and waters; every family chooses its own clump of trees; and we lay the corpse in these leafy colonnades.

A grove of trees — what benefit or ornament is so fair and great? they make the landscape; they keep the earth habitable; their roots run down, like cattle, to the water-courses; their heads expand to feed the atmosphere. The life of a tree is a hundred and a thousand years; its decays ornamental; its repairs self-made: they grow when we sleep, they grew when we were unborn. Man is a moth among these longevities. He plants for the next millennium. Shadows haunt them; all that ever lived about them cling to them. You can almost see behind these pines the Indians with bow and arrow lurking yet exploring the traces of the old trail.

This tract fortunately lies adjoining to the Agricultural Society's ground, to the New Burial Ground, to the Court House and the Town House, making together a large block of public ground, permanent property of the town and county — all the ornaments of either adding so much value to all.

I suppose all of us will readily admit the value of parks and cultivated grounds to the pleasure and education of the people, but I have heard it said here that we would gladly spend for a park for the living, but not for a cemetery; a garden for the living, a home of thought and friendship. Certainly the living need it more than the dead; indeed, to speak precisely, it is given to the dead for the reaction of benefit on the living. But if the direct regard to the living be thought

expedient, that is also in your power. This ground is happily so divided by Nature as to admit of this relation between the Past and the Present.

In the valley where we stand will be the Monuments. On the other side of the ridge, towards the town, a portion of the land is in full view of the cheer of the village and is out of sight of the Monuments; it admits of being reserved for secular purposes; for games — not such as the Greeks honored the dead with, but for games of education; the distribution of school prizes; the meeting of teachers; patriotic eloquence, the utterance of the principles of national liberty to private, social, literary or religious fraternities. Here we may establish that most agreeable of all museums, and agreeable to the temper of our times — an *Arboretum* — wherein may be planted, by the taste of every citizen, one tree, with its name recorded in a book; every tree that is native to Massachusetts, or will grow in it; so that every child may be shown growing, side by side, the eleven oaks of Massachusetts; and the twenty willows; the beech, which we have allowed to die out of the eastern counties; and here the vast firs of California and Oregon.

This spot for twenty years has borne the name of *Sleepy Hollow*. Its seclusion from the village in its immediate neighborhood had made it to all the inhabitants an easy retreat on a Sabbath day, or a summer twilight, and it was inevitably chosen by them when the design of a new cemetery was broached, if it did not suggest the design, as the fit place for their final repose. In all the multitudes of woodlands and

hillsides, which within a few years have been laid out with a similar design, I have not known one so fitly named. *Sleepy Hollow.* In this quiet valley, as in the palm of Nature's hand, we shall sleep well when we have finished our day. What is the Earth itself but a surface scooped into nooks and caves of slumber — according to the Eastern fable, a bridge full of holes, into one or other of which all the passengers sink to silence? Nay, when I think of the mystery of life, its round of illusions, our ignorance of its beginning or its end, the speed of the changes of that glittering dream we call existence — I think sometimes that the vault of the sky arching there upward, under which our busy being is whirled, is only a Sleepy Hollow, with path of Suns, instead of foot-paths; and Milky Ways, for truck-roads.

The ground has the peaceful character that belongs to this town; — no lofty crags, no glittering cataracts; — but I hold that every part of Nature is handsome when not deformed by bad Art. Bleak sea-rocks and sea-downs and blasted heaths have their own beauty; and though we make much ado in our praises of Italy or Andes, Nature makes not so much difference. The morning, the moonlight, the spring day, are magical painters, and can glorify a meadow or a rock.

But we must look forward also, and make ourselves a thousand years old; and when these acorns, that are falling at our feet, are oaks over-shadowing our children in a remote century, this mute green bank will be full of history: the good, the wise and great will have left their names and virtues on the trees; heroes, poets,

beauties, sanctities, benefactors, will have made the air timeable and articulate.

And hither shall repair, to this modest spot of God's earth, every sweet and friendly influence; the beautiful night and beautiful day will come in turn to sit upon the grass. Our use will not displace the old tenants. The well-beloved birds will not sing one song the less, the high-holding woodpecker, the meadow-lark, the oriole, robin, purple finch, blue-bird, thrush and red-eyed warbler, the heron, the bittern will find out the hospitality and protection from the gun of this asylum, and will seek the waters of the meadow; and in the grass, and by the pond, the locust, the cricket and the hyla, shall shrilly play.

We shall bring hither the body of the dead, but how shall we catch the escaped soul? Here will burn for us, as the oath of God, the sublime belief. I have heard that death takes us away from ill things, not from good. I have heard that when we pronounce the name of man, we pronounce the belief of immortality. All great natures delight in stability; all great men find eternity affirmed in the promise of their faculties. Why is the fable of the Wandering Jew agreeable to men, but because they want more time and land to execute their thoughts in? Life is not long enough for art, nor long enough for friendship. The evidence from intellect is as valid as the evidence from love. The being that can share a thought and feeling so sublime as confidence in truth is no mushroom. Our dissatisfaction with any other solution is the blazing evidence of immortality.

. . . . . .

All the comfort I have found teaches me to confide that I shall not have less in times and places that I do not yet know. I have known admirable persons, without feeling that they exhaust the possibilities of virtue and talent. I have seen the glories of climate, of summer mornings and evenings, of midnight sky; I have enjoyed the benefits of all this complex machinery of arts and civilization, and its results of comfort. The good power can easily provide me millions more as good. Shall I hold on with both hands to every paltry possession? All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.

I am, like you, a seeker of the perfect and admirable Good. My creed is very simple, that Goodness is the only Reality, that to Goodness alone can we trust, to that we may trust all and always; beautiful and blessed and blessing is it, even though it should seem to slay me.

Beyond this I have no knowledge, no intelligence of methods; I know no steps, no degrees, no favorite means, no detached rules. Itself is gate and road and leader and march. Only trust it, be of it, be it, and it shall be well with us forever. It will be and govern in its own transcendent way, and not in ways that arithmetic and mortal experience can measure. I can surely give no account of the origin and growth of my trust, but this only, that the trust accompanies the incoming of that which is trusted. Blessed be that! Happy am I when I am a trust; unhappy and so far dead if it should ebb from me. If I, if all should deny it, there not the less would it be and prevail and create.

We are poor, but it is rich: as every wave crests itself with foam, so this can incarnate itself everywhere with armies of ministers, inorganic, organic plant, brute, man, angel, to execute its will. What have we to do but to cry to it All-Hail, Good Spirit; it is enough for us that we take form for thy needs: Thou art in us; Thou art us. Shall we not learn to look upon our bodies with a religious joy, and empty every object of its meanness by seeing how it came to be?

I count you happy that your soul suggests to you such affectionate and noble errands to other spirits as the wish to give them your happiness and your freedom. That the Good Heart, which is the heart of us all, may still enrich you with new and larger impulses of joy and power is the wish of your affectionate servant.

SLEEPY HOLLOW

No abbey's gloom, nor dark cathedral stoops,
  No winding torches paint the midnight air;
Here the green pines delight, the aspen droops
  Along the modest pathways, and those fair
Pale asters of the season spread their plumes
Around this field, fit garden for our tombs.

And shalt thou pause to hear some funeral-bell
  Slow stealing o'er the heart in this calm place,
Not with a throb of pain, a feverish knell,
  But in its kind and supplicating grace,
It says, Go, pilgrim, on thy march, be more
Friend to the friendless than thou wast before;

Learn from the loved one's rest serenity;
  To-morrow that soft bell for thee shall sound,
And thou repose beneath the whispering tree,
  One tribute more to this submissive ground; —
Prison thy soul from malice, bar out pride,
Nor these pale flowers nor this still field deride:

Rather to those ascents of being turn
  Where a ne'er-setting sun illumes the year
Eternal, and the incessant watch-fires burn
  Of unspent holiness and goodness clear —
Forget man's littleness, deserve the best,
God's mercy in thy thought and life confest.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

HAWTHORNE'S CONCORD

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

ALTHOUGH the quaint old town of Salem, Massachusetts, may boast the honor of being Hawthorne's birthplace, the literary pilgrim turns to the town of Concord, and to the homes there in which the 'Wizard' dwelt, as the environment with which he was most closely identified.

Heaven sends us our birthplaces, but later we choose our homes. Hawthorne chose Concord, and took his bride there, cherishing an affection for this peaceful locality such as he never felt for the town of his birth.

Hawthorne was thirty-eight years old, when, on July 6, 1842, he married Miss Sophia Peabody, a union which proved an ideal one. The ceremony was performed by the Reverend James Freeman Clarke, at the home of Dr. Peabody, 13 West Street, Boston, and, by a strange coincidence, the clergyman never afterward met Mr. and Mrs. Hawthorne until, on the 19th of May, 1864, he preached the funeral sermon at Concord over the remains of the distinguished novelist.

After his marriage, Hawthorne established himself at the 'Old Manse,' which in its early days had been the principal house in Concord, and the only one boasting two chimneys. It was built in 1765, for the Reverend William Emerson (grandfather of Ralph Waldo), who played an heroic part in the struggle for liberty. This young minister, who encouraged his parishioners upon the village green and could hardly be restrained from standing with them during the fight, eventually

joined the patriot army at Ticonderoga, as chaplain and died of camp-fever. His widow subsequently married the Reverend Ezra Ripley, who wrote many sermons in the small square room with its high wainscoting and oaken beams overhead, where Hawthorne discovered there dwelt a certain ghost that on a winter's night was wont to lift the latch, allowing a cold gust to sweep into the apartment. Opposite this study is a large room used as a parlor, and from this a door opens into the ancient dining-room where the old-time ministers held their solemn feasts. Across from this room is the big kitchen with its enormous fireplace originally used for all cooking purposes, where, despite the encroachment of a modern cooking-stove, the old hooks and iron crane still remain.

In one corner, upon the southern side, is a curious little room which has been always known as the 'Saints' Chamber'; its walls bearing inscriptions in the handwriting of the holy men who have tarried there, and on the glass of one of the western windows facing the orchard are several inscriptions, written with a diamond. Among them are the following:

Man's accidents are God's purposes.
Sophia A. Hawthorne 1843

Nathl Hawthorne
This is his study
1843

And lower down:

Inscribed by my husband at
sunset April 3rd. 1843
In the gold light. S. A. H.

The room over the dining-room is perhaps the most interesting of all, for it was here that Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote 'Nature' and also a number of his best poems, and from one of the windows in this room the wife of the Reverend William Emerson watched the progress of the fight on the 19th of April, 1775, and one hundred years later her granddaughter watched the procession marching down to dedicate the new monument erected to commemorate the historic event. This monument, 'The Minute-man,' is yearly inspected by countless visitors who linger admiringly before the masterpiece of Daniel Chester French, Concord's own sculptor.

After four happy years spent in Concord, the Hawthornes again moved to Salem for a period of four years, during which time Hawthorne held the post of surveyor in the Salem Custom-House. Then, after a brief stay in Lenox, they again took up their residence in Concord, in 1852, at which time Hawthorne purchased 'The Wayside' from Bronson Alcott.

This house, which was later enlarged, stands close to the Lexington road, along which the British troops retreated in 1775. Behind the house a ridge of land slopes upward to a height of sixty or seventy feet, and on the crest of this ridge Hawthorne had his favorite out-of-door retreat; here he used to pace up and down among the sweet-fern and wild blackberries, meditating upon the creations of his fancy; here those passing could catch a glimpse of his quiet figure moving through the grove, where his constant tread wore a well-beaten path under the trees. There are dark pines

in front of the lawn and the evergreens which prevail on the hill back of the house give a sombre and shadowy aspect to the place which seems to bespeak the shy and mysterious presence which once dwelt there. Close to the porch is a hawthorn tree which might have served as a rustic door-plate for the one-time owner, and over one end of the house clamber woodbine and roses.

'I know nothing of the history of this house,' Hawthorne wrote to a friend, 'except Thoreau's telling me that it was inhabitated a generation or two ago by a man who believed he should never die. I believe, however, he is dead: at least I hope so; else he may probably appear and dispute my title to his residence.' That this early tenant did reappear in 'Septimius Felton,' the scene of which is laid at 'The Wayside,' the readers of this fantastic tale will testify, as well as to the likelihood of this gentleman's immortality.

After his return from England and Italy, Hawthorne made several additions to this house, among other things putting up a small square tower in playful remembrance of the tower he had so much enjoyed in the villa of Montaüto, near Florence. The top room in this tower he used as a study when the temperature permitted; this apartment was simple even to bareness, with a few pictures on the walls and two or three ornaments on the mantel. His writing-table was of the plainest style and on it stood the inkstand, still preserved, which he used in writing the 'Marble Faun,' and his later works. This inkstand is an Italian bronze representing the well-known 'Boy strangling a Swan.'

'THE WAYSIDE'

In his last years Hawthorne sought relief from writing in a cramped position by using a standing-desk, which is still visible in its accustomed place in this airy study.

During the last years of Hawthorne's life he often occupied the small lower room upon the left of the entrance to the house, where his books were collected. Here in his rich, sympathetic voice he read aloud to his family the novels of Sir Walter Scott and other favorite works.

After the owner's death, the property passed into the hands of his son-in-law George Parsons Lathrop, who, in 1883, sold it to the publisher Daniel Lothrop, whose widow long made 'The Wayside' her summer home. Mrs. Lothrop, well known as a writer for little folks, under her pen-name 'Margaret Sydney,' took pains to leave the grounds unaltered from their original design. The interior shows many relics of Hawthorne, carefully preserved, in addition to which the dwelling is filled with antique furniture and other objects of beauty and interest. Since Mrs. Lothrop's death 'The Wayside' has become the property of her daughter.

In the middle of May, 1864, Hawthorne, then very ill, departed from 'The Wayside' for the last time, with his friend Franklin Pierce on a journey in search of renewed health. A few days later came the sad news of his sudden passing away at Plymouth, New Hampshire, and on May 23d, Hawthorne was laid in the beautiful cemetery of Sleepy Hollow, on the top of the hill beneath a group of tall pines, where, in days gone by, he and his wife had often rested under the trees and had made plans for their home.

Of this his last home, Hawthorne wrote to George William Curtis:

'As for my old house, you will understand it better after spending a day or two in it. Before Mr. Alcott took it in hand, it was a mean-looking affair; no suggestiveness about it and no venerableness, although from the style of its construction it seems to have survived beyond its first century. He added a porch in front, and a central peak, and a piazza at each end, and painted it a rusty olive hue, and invested the whole with a modest picturesqueness; all which improvements, together with its situation at the foot of a wooded hill, make it a place that one notices and remembers for a few moments after passing it. Mr. Alcott expended a good deal of taste and some money (to no great purpose) in forming the hillside behind the house into terraces and building arbors and summer-houses of rough stems and branches of trees, on a system of his own. . . . The house stands within ten or fifteen feet of the old Boston road (along which the British marched and retreated) divided from it by a fence and some trees and shrubbery of Mr. Alcott's setting out. Whereupon I have called it "The Wayside."'

A final picture of Hawthorne's last days in this peaceful spot is offered by his son, who says:

'It was his custom to ascend hither in the late afternoon and walk his beat for an hour or two till sunset, his hands clasped behind him and his eyes gazing forward or downward abstractedly; occasionally he would pause on the western extremity of the path, which com-

manded a wide view toward the Concord meadows, and stand looking out over the sunset clouds. During the spring and summer of 1863, the last summer and the last spring but one before his death, his wife used often to ascend the hill with him, and they would loiter about together, or sit down on the wooden benches that had been set up beneath the larger pines, or at points here and there whence glimpses of the vale were to be had. At other times they would stroll down the larch path to the brook, where was a pleasant gurgle of water, and a graceful dip and shadow of willows, and the warble of bobolinks and blackbirds. They were as constantly together during the last years as during the first of their married life at the Old Manse; and they talked much together in the low, sympathetic tones that were characteristic of them. They were always happy in each other, and serene.'

CHAPTER VII

MANSE AND BATTLE-GROUND

Between two tall gateposts of rough-hewn stone (the gate itself having fallen from its hinges at some unknown epoch) we beheld the gray front of the old parsonage terminating the vista of an avenue of black ash-trees. It was now a twelvemonth since the funeral procession of the venerable clergyman, its last inhabitant, had turned from that gateway towards the village burying-ground. The wheel-track leading to the door, as well as the whole breadth of the avenue, was almost overgrown with grass, affording dainty mouthfuls to two or three vagrant cows and an old white horse who had his own living to pick up along the roadside. The glimmering shadows that lay half asleep between the door of the house and the public highway were a kind of spiritual medium, seen through which the edifice had not quite the aspect of belonging to the material world. Certainly it had little in common with those ordinary abodes which stand so imminent upon the road that every passer-by can thrust his head, as it were, into the domestic circle. From these quiet windows the figures of passing travellers looked too remote and dim to disturb the sense of privacy. In its near retirement and accessible seclusion it was the very spot for the residence of a clergyman — a man not estranged from human life, yet enveloped in the midst of it with a veil woven of intermingled gloom

THE OLD MANSE

and brightness. It was worthy to have been one of the time-honored parsonages of England in which, through many generations, a succession of holy occupants pass from youth to age, and bequeath each an inheritance of sanctity to pervade the house and hover over it as with an atmosphere.

Nor, in truth, had the Old Manse ever been profaned by a lay occupant until that memorable summer afternoon when I entered it as my home. A priest had built it; a priest had succeeded to it; other priestly men from time to time had dwelt in it; and children born in its chambers had grown up to assume the priestly character. It was awful to reflect how many sermons must have been written there. The latest inhabitant alone — he by whose translation to paradise the dwelling was left vacant — had penned nearly three thousand discourses, besides the better, if not the greater, number that gushed living from his lips. How often, no doubt, had he paced to and fro along the avenue, attuning his meditations to the sighs and gentle murmurs, and deep and solemn peals of the wind among the lofty tops of the trees! In that variety of natural utterances he could find something accordant with every passage of his sermon, were it of tenderness or reverential fear. The boughs over my head seemed shadowy with solemn thoughts as well as with rustling leaves. I took shame to myself for having been so long a writer of idle stories, and ventured to hope that wisdom would descend upon me with the falling leaves of the avenue, and that I should light upon an intellectual treasure in the Old Manse well

worth those hoards of long-hidden gold which people seek for in moss-grown houses.

In furtherance of my design, and as if to leave me no pretext for not fulfilling it, there was in the rear of the house the most delightful little nook of a study that ever afforded its snug seclusion to a scholar. It was here that Emerson wrote Nature; for he was then an inhabitant of the Manse, and used to watch the Assyrian dawn and Paphian sunset and moonrise from the summit of our eastern hill. When I first saw the room its walls were blackened with the smoke of unnumbered years, and made still blacker by the grim prints of Puritan ministers that hung around. These worthies looked strangely like bad angels, or at least like men who had wrestled so continually and so sternly with the devil that somewhat of his sooty fierceness had been imparted to their own visages. They had all vanished now; a cheerful coat of paint and golden-tinted paper-hangings lighted up the small apartment; while the shadow of a willow-tree that swept against the overhanging eaves attempered the cheery western sunshine. In place of the grim prints there was the sweet and lovely head of one of Raphael's Madonnas and two pleasant little pictures of the Lake of Como. The only other decorations were a purple vase of flowers, always fresh, and a bronze one containing graceful ferns. My books (few, and by no means choice; for they were chiefly such waifs as chance had thrown in my way) stood in order about the room, seldom to be disturbed.

The study had three windows, set with little, old-

fashioned panes of glass, each with a crack across it. The two on the western side looked, or rather peeped, between the willow branches down into the orchard, with glimpses of the river through the trees. The third, facing northward, commanded a broader view of the river at a spot where its hitherto obscure waters gleam forth into the light of history. It was at this window that the clergyman who then dwelt in the Manse stood watching the outbreak of a long and deadly struggle between two nations; he saw the irregular array of his parishioners on the farther side of the river and the glittering line of the British on the hither bank. He awaited in an agony of suspense the rattle of the musketry. It came, and there needed but a gentle wind to sweep the battle smoke around this quiet house.

Perhaps the reader, whom I cannot help considering as my guest in the Old Manse and entitled to all courtesy in the way of sight-showing — perhaps he will choose to take a nearer view of the memorable spot. We stand now on the river's brink. It may well be called the Concord, the river of peace and quietness; for it is certainly the most unexcitable and sluggish stream that ever loitered imperceptibly towards its eternity — the sea. Positively, I had lived three weeks beside it before it grew quite clear to my perception which way the current flowed. It never has a vivacious aspect except when a northwestern breeze is vexing its surface on a sunshiny day. From the incurable indolence of its nature, the stream is happily incapable of becoming the slave of human ingenuity,

as is the fate of so many a wild, free mountain torrent. While all things else are compelled to subserve some useful purpose, it idles its sluggish life away in lazy liberty, without turning a solitary spindle or affording even water-power enough to grind the corn that grows upon its banks. The torpor of its movement allows it nowhere a bright, pebbly shore, nor so much as a narrow strip of glistening sand, in any part of its course. It slumbers between broad prairies, kissing the long meadow grass, and bathes the overhanging boughs of elder bushes and willows or the roots of elms and ash-trees and clumps of maples. Flags and rushes grow along its plashy shore; the yellow water-lily spreads its broad, flat leaves on the margin; and the fragrant white pond-lily abounds, generally selecting a position just so far from the river's brink that it cannot be grasped save at the hazard of plunging in.

It is a marvel whence this perfect flower derives its loveliness and perfume, springing as it does from the black mud over which the river sleeps, and where lurk the slimy eel and speckled frog and the mud turtle, whom continual washing cannot cleanse. It is the very same black mud out of which the yellow lily sucks its obscene life and noisome odor. Thus we see, too, in the world that some persons assimilate only what is ugly and evil from the same moral circumstances which supply good and beautiful results—the fragrance of celestial flowers—to the daily life of others.

The reader must not, from any testimony of mine, contract a dislike towards our slumberous stream. In the light of a calm and golden sunset it becomes

lovely beyond expression; the more lovely for the quietude that so well accords with the hour, when even the wind, after blustering all day long, usually hushes itself to rest. Each tree and rock, and every blade of grass, is distinctly imaged, and, however unsightly in reality, assumes ideal beauty in the reflection. The minutest things of earth and the broad aspect of the firmament are pictured equally without effort and with the same felicity of success. All the sky glows downward at our feet; the rich clouds float through the unruffled bosom of the stream like heavenly thoughts through a peaceful heart. We will not, then, malign our river as gross and impure while it can glorify itself with so adequate a picture of the heaven that broods above it; or, if we remember its tawny hue and the muddiness of its bed, let it be a symbol that the earthliest human soul has an infinite spiritual capacity and may contain the better world within its depths. But, indeed, the same lesson might be drawn out of any mud puddle in the streets of a city; and, being taught us everywhere, it must be true.

Come, we have pursued a somewhat devious track in our walk to the battle-ground. Here we are, at the point where the river was crossed by the old bridge, the possession of which was the immediate object of the contest. On the hither side grow two or three elms, throwing a wide circumference of shade, but which must have been planted at some period within the threescore years and ten that have passed since the battle day. On the farther shore, overhung by a clump of elder bushes, we discern the stone abutment

of the bridge. Looking down into the river, I once discovered some heavy fragments of the timbers, all green with half a century's growth of water moss; for during that length of time the tramp of horses and human footsteps has ceased along this ancient highway. The stream has here about the breadth of twenty strokes of a swimmer's arm — a space not too wide when the bullets were whistling across. Old people who dwell hereabouts will point out the very spots on the western bank where our countrymen fell down and died; and on this side of the river an obelisk of granite has grown up from the soil that was fertilized with British blood. The monument, not more than twenty feet in height, is such as it befitted the inhabitants of a village to erect in illustration of a matter of local interest rather than what was suitable to commemorate an epoch of national history. Still, by the fathers of the village this famous deed was done; and their descendants might rightfully claim the privilege of building a memorial.

A humbler token of the fight, yet a more interesting one than the granite obelisk, may be seen close under the stone wall which separates the battle-ground from the precincts of the parsonage. It is the grave — marked by a small, mossgrown fragment of stone at the head and another at the foot — the grave of two British soldiers who were slain in the skirmish, and have ever since slept peacefully where Zechariah Brown and Thomas Davis buried them. Soon was their warfare ended; a weary night march from Boston, a rattling volley of musketry across the river, and

then these many years of rest. In the long procession of slain invaders who passed into eternity from the battle-fields of the revolution, these two nameless soldiers led the way.

Many strangers come in the summer time to view the battle-ground. For my own part, I have never found my imagination much excited by this or any other scene of historic celebrity; nor would the placid margin of the river have lost any of its charm for me had men never fought and died there. There is a wilder interest in the tract of land — perhaps a hundred yards in breadth — which extends between the battle-field and the northern face of our Old Manse, with its contiguous avenue and orchard. Here, in some unknown age, before the white man came, stood an Indian village, convenient to the river, whence its inhabitants must have drawn so large a part of their subsistence. The site is identified by the spear and arrowheads, the chisels, and other implements of war, labor, and the chase, which the plough turns up from the soil. You see a splinter of stone, half hidden beneath a sod; it looks like nothing worthy of note; but, if you have faith enough to pick it up, behold a relic! Thoreau, who has a strange faculty of finding what the Indians have left behind them, first set me on the search; and I afterwards enriched myself with some very perfect specimens, so rudely wrought that it seemed almost as if chance had fashioned them. Their great charm consists in this rudeness and in the individuality of each article, so different from the productions of civilized machinery, which shapes every-

thing on one pattern. There is exquisite delight, too, in picking up for one's self an arrowhead that was dropped centuries ago and has never been handled since, and which we thus receive directly from the hand of the red hunter, who purposed to shoot it at his game or at an enemy. Such an incident builds up again the Indian village and its encircling forest, and recalls to life the painted chiefs and warriors, the squaws at their household toil, and the children sporting among the wigwams, while the little wind-rocked pappoose swings from the branch of the tree. It can hardly be told whether it is a joy or a pain, after such a momentary vision, to gaze around in the broad daylight of reality and see stone fences, white houses, potato fields, and men doggedly hoeing in their shirt-sleeves and homespun pantaloons. But this is nonsense. The Old Manse is better than a thousand wigwams.

CHAPTER VIII

GARDEN AND GARRET

The Old Manse! We had almost forgotten it, but will return thither through the orchard. This was set out by the last clergyman, in the decline of his life, when the neighbors laughed at the hoary-headed man for planting trees from which he could have no prospect of gathering fruit. Even had that been the case, there was only so much the better motive for planting them, in the pure and unselfish hope of benefiting his successors—an end so seldom achieved by more ambitious efforts. But the old minister, before reaching his patriarchal age of ninety, ate the apples from this orchard during many years, and added silver and gold to his annual stipend by disposing of the superfluity. It is pleasant to think of him walking among the trees in the quiet afternoons of early autumn and picking up here and there a windfall, while he observes how heavily the branches are weighed down, and computes the number of empty flour barrels that will be filled by their burden. He loved each tree, doubtless, as if it had been his own child. An orchard has a relation to mankind, and readily connects itself with matters of the heart. The trees possess a domestic character; they have lost the wild nature of their forest kindred, and have grown humanized by receiving the care of man as well as by contributing to his wants. There is so much individuality of character,

too, among apple-trees that it gives them an additional claim to be the objects of human interest. One is harsh and crabbed in its manifestations; another gives us fruit as mild as charity. One is churlish and illiberal, evidently grudging the few apples that it bears; another exhausts itself in free-hearted benevolence. The variety of grotesque shapes into which apple-trees contort themselves has its effect on those who get acquainted with them: they stretch out their crooked branches, and take such hold of the imagination that we remember them as humorists and odd-fellows. And what is more melancholy than the old apple-trees that linger about the spot where once stood a homestead, but where there is now only a ruined chimney rising out of a grassy and weed-grown cellar? They offer their fruit to every wayfarer — apples that are bitter sweet with the moral of Time's vicissitude.

I have met with no other such pleasant trouble in the world as that of finding myself, with only the two or three mouths which it was my privilege to feed, the sole inheritor of the old clergyman's wealth of fruits. Throughout the summer there were cherries and currants; and then came autumn, with his immense burden of apples, dropping them continually from his overladen shoulders as he trudged along. In the stillest afternoon, if I listened, the thump of a great apple was audible, falling without a breath of wind, from the mere necessity of perfect ripeness. And, besides, there were pear-trees, that flung down bushels upon bushels of heavy pears; and peach-trees, which,

in a good year, tormented me with peaches, neither to be eaten nor kept, nor, without labor and perplexity, to be given away. The idea of an infinite generosity and exhaustless bounty on the part of our Mother Nature was well worth obtaining through such cares as these. That feeling can be enjoyed in perfection only by the natives of summer islands, where the bread-fruit, the cocoa, the palm, and the orange grow spontaneously and hold forth the ever-ready meal; but likewise almost as well by a man long habituated to city life, who plunges into such a solitude as that of the Old Manse, where he plucks the fruit of trees that he did not plant, and which therefore, to my heterodox taste, bear the closest resemblance to those that grew in Eden. It has been an apothegm these five thousand years, that toil sweetens the bread it earns. For my part (speaking from hard experience, acquired while belaboring the rugged furrows of Brook Farm), I relish best the free gifts of Providence.

Not that it can be disputed that the light toil requisite to cultivate a moderately-sized garden imparts such zest to kitchen vegetables as is never found in those of the market gardener. Childless men, if they would know something of the bliss of paternity, should plant a seed — be it squash, bean, Indian corn, or perhaps a mere flower or worthless weed — should plant it with their own hands, and nurse it from infancy to maturity altogether by their own care. If there be not too many of them, each individual plant becomes an object of separate interest. My garden, that skirted the avenue of the Manse, was of precisely

the right extent. An hour or two of morning labor was all that it required. But I used to visit and revisit it a dozen times a day, and stand in deep contemplation over my vegetable progeny with a love that nobody could share or conceive of who had never taken part in the process of creation. It was one of the most bewitching sights in the world to observe a hill of beans thrusting aside the soil, or a row of early peas just peeping forth sufficiently to trace a line of delicate green. Later in the season the humming-birds were attracted by the blossoms of a peculiar variety of bean; and they were a joy to me, those little spiritual visitants, for deigning to sip airy food out of my nectar cups. Multitudes of bees used to bury themselves in the yellow blossoms of the summer squashes. This, too, was a deep satisfaction; although when they had laden themselves with sweets they flew away to some unknown hive, which would give back nothing in requital of what my garden had contributed. But I was glad thus to fling a benefaction upon the passing breeze with the certainty that somebody must profit by it, and that there would be a little more honey in the world to allay the sourness and bitterness which mankind is always complaining of. Yes, indeed; my life was the sweeter for that honey.

Speaking of summer squashes, I must say a word of their beautiful and varied forms. They presented an endless diversity of urns and vases, shallow or deep, scalloped or plain, moulded in patterns which a sculptor would do well to copy, since Art has never invented anything more graceful. A hundred squashes in the

garden were worthy, in my eyes at least, of being rendered indestructible in marble. If ever Providence (but I know it never will) should assign me a superfluity of gold, part of it shall be expended for a service of plate, or most delicate porcelain, to be wrought into the shapes of summer squashes gathered from vines which I will plant with my own hands. As dishes for containing vegetables they would be peculiarly appropriate.

But not merely the squeamish love of the beautiful was gratified by my toil in the kitchen garden. There was a hearty enjoyment, likewise, in observing the growth of the crook-necked winter squashes, from the first little bulb, with the withered blossom adhering to it, until they lay strewn upon the soil, big, round fellows, hiding their heads beneath the leaves, but turning up their great yellow rotundities to the noontide sun. Gazing at them, I felt that by my agency something worth living for had been done. A new substance was born into the world. They were real and tangible existences, which the mind could seize hold of and rejoice in. A cabbage, too — especially the early Dutch cabbage, which swells to a monstrous circumference, until its ambitious heart often bursts asunder — is a matter to be proud of when we can claim a share with the earth and sky in producing it. But, after all, the hugest pleasure is reserved until these vegetable children of ours are smoking on the table, and we, like Saturn, make a meal of them.

What with the river, the battle-field, the orchard and the garden, the reader begins to despair of finding

his way back into the Old Manse. But in agreeable weather it is the truest hospitality to keep him out-of-doors. I never grew quite acquainted with my habitation till a long spell of sulky rain had confined me beneath its roof. There could not be a more sombre aspect of external Nature than as then seen from the windows of my study. The great willow-tree had caught and retained among its leaves a whole cataract of water, to be shaken down at intervals by the frequent gusts of wind. All day long, and for a week together, the rain was drip-drip-dripping and splash-splash-splashing from the eaves, and bubbling and foaming into the tubs beneath the spouts. The old, unpainted shingles of the house and out-buildings were black with moisture; and the mosses of ancient growth upon the walls looked green and fresh, as if they were the newest things and afterthought of Time. The usually mirrored surface of the river was blurred by an infinity of raindrops; the whole landscape had a completely water-soaked appearance, conveying the impression that the earth was wet through like a sponge; while the summit of a wooded hill, about a mile distant, was enveloped in a dense mist, where the demon of the tempest seemed to have his abiding-place and to be plotting still direr inclemencies.

Nature has no kindness, no hospitality, during a rain. In the fiercest heat of sunny days she retains a secret mercy, and welcomes the wayfarer to shady nooks of the woods whither the sun cannot penetrate; but she provides no shelter against her storms. It makes us shiver to think of those deep, umbrageous

recesses, those overshadowing banks, where we found such enjoyment during the sultry afternoons. Not a twig of foliage there but would dash a little shower into our faces. Looking reproachfully towards the impenetrable sky — if sky there be above that dismal uniformity of cloud — we are apt to murmur against the whole system of the universe, since it involves the extinction of so many summer days in so short a life by the hissing and spluttering rain. In such spells of weather — and it is to be supposed such weather came — Eve's bower in paradise must have been but a cheerless and aguish kind of shelter, nowise comparable to the old parsonage, which had resources of its own to beguile the week's imprisonment. The idea of sleeping on a couch of wet roses!

Happy the man who in a rainy day can betake himself to a huge garret, stored, like that of the Manse, with lumber that each generation has left behind it from a period before the revolution. Our garret was an arched hall, dimly illuminated through small and dusty windows; it was but a twilight at the best; and there were nooks, or rather caverns, of deep obscurity, the secrets of which I never learned, being too reverent of their dust and cobwebs. The beams and rafters, roughly hewn and with strips of bark still on them, and the rude masonry of the chimneys, made the garret look wild and uncivilized — an aspect unlike what was seen elsewhere in the quiet and decorous old house. But on one side there was a little whitewashed apartment which bore the traditionary title of the Saint's Chamber, because holy men in their youth had

slept and studied and prayed there. With its elevated retirement, its one window, its small fireplace, and its closet, convenient for an oratory, it was the very spot where a young man might inspire himself with solemn enthusiasm and cherish saintly dreams. The occupants, at various epochs, had left brief records and ejaculations inscribed upon the walls. There, too, hung a tattered and shrivelled roll of canvas, which on inspection proved to be the forcibly wrought picture of a clergyman, in wig, band, and gown, holding a Bible in his hand. As I turned his face towards the light he eyed me with an air of authority such as men of his profession seldom assume in our days. The original had been pastor of the parish more than a century ago, a friend of Whitefield, and almost his equal in fervid eloquence. I bowed before the effigy of the dignified divine, and felt as if I had now met face to face with the ghost by whom, as there was reason to apprehend, the Manse was haunted.

Houses of any antiquity in New England are so invariably possessed with spirits that the matter seems hardly worth alluding to. Our ghost used to heave deep sighs in a particular corner of the parlor, and sometimes rustled paper, as if he were turning over a sermon in the long upper entry — where nevertheless he was invisible in spite of the bright moonshine that fell through the eastern window. Not improbably he wished me to edit and publish a selection from a chest full of manuscript discourses that stood in the garret. Once, while Hillard and other friends sat talking with us in the twilight, there came a

rustling noise as of a minister's silk gown, sweeping through the very midst of the company so closely as almost to brush against the chairs. Still there was nothing visible. A yet stranger business was that of a ghostly servant maid, who used to be heard in the kitchen at deepest midnight, grinding coffee, cooking, ironing — performing, in short, all kinds of domestic labor — although no traces of anything accomplished could be detected the next morning. Some neglected duty of her servitude — some ill-starched ministerial band — disturbed the poor damsel in her grave and kept her at work without any wages.

But to return from this digression. A part of my predecessor's library was stored in the garret — no unfit receptacle indeed for such dreary trash as comprised the greater number of volumes. The old books would have been worth nothing at an auction. In this venerable garret, however, they possessed an interest, quite apart from their literary value, as heirlooms, many of which had been transmitted down through a series of consecrated hands from the days of the mighty Puritan divines.

The rain pattered upon the roof and the sky gloomed through the dusty garret windows, while I burrowed among these venerable books in search of any living thought which should burn like a coal of fire, or glow like an inextinguishable gem, beneath the dead trumpery that had long hidden it. But I found no such treasure; all was dead alike; and I could not but muse deeply and wonderingly upon the humiliating fact that the works of man's intellect decay like

those of his hands. Thought grows mouldy. What was good and nourishing food for the spirits of one generation affords no sustenance for the next. Books of religion, however, cannot be considered a fair test of the enduring and vivacious properties of human thought, because such books so seldom really touch upon their ostensible subject, and have, therefore, so little business to be written at all. So long as an unlettered soul can attain to saving grace, there would seem to be no deadly error in holding theological libraries to be accumulations of, for the most part, stupendous impertinence.

Nothing, strange to say, retained any sap except what had been written for the passing day and year without the remotest pretension or idea of permanence. There were a few old newspapers, and still older almanacs, which reproduced to my mental eye the epochs when they had issued from the press with a distinctness that was altogether unaccountable. It was as if I had found bits of magic looking-glass among the books, with the images of a vanished century in them. I turned my eyes towards the tattered picture above mentioned, and asked of the austere divine wherefore it was that he and his brethren, after the most painful rummaging and groping into their minds, had been able to produce nothing half so real as these newspaper scribblers and almanac makers had thrown off in the effervescence of a moment. The portrait responded not; so I sought an answer for myself. It is the age itself that writes newspapers and almanacs, which, therefore, have a distinct purpose and mean-

ing at the time, and a kind of intelligible truth for all times; whereas most other works — being written by men who, in the very act, set themselves apart from their age — are likely to possess little significance when new, and none at all when old. Genius, indeed, melts many ages into one, and thus effects something permanent, yet still with a similarity of office to that of the more ephemeral writer. A work of genius is but the newspaper of a century, or perchance of a hundred centuries.

Lightly as I have spoken of these old books, there yet lingers with me a superstitious reverence for literature of all kinds. A bound volume has a charm in my eyes similar to what scraps of manuscript possess for the good of Mussulman. He imagines that those wind-wafted records are perhaps hallowed by some sacred verse; and I, that every new book or antique one may contain the 'open sesame' — the spell to disclose treasures hidden in some unsuspected cave of Truth. Thus it was not without sadness that I turned away from the library of the Old Manse.

CHAPTER IX

PLEASURES OF PARADISE

A RAINY day — a rainy day. I am commanded to take pen in hand, and I am therefore banished to the little ten-foot-square apartment misnamed my study; but perhaps the dismalness of the day and the dulness of my solitude will be the prominent characteristics of what I write. And what is there to write about? Happiness has no succession of events, because it is a part of eternity; and we have been living in eternity ever since we came to this old manse. Like Enoch, we seem to have been translated to the other state of being, without having passed through death. Our spirits must have flitted away unconsciously, and we can only perceive that we have cast off our mortal part by the more real and earnest life of our souls. Externally, our Paradise has very much the aspect of a pleasant old domicile on earth. . . . Few, indeed, are the mortals who venture within our sacred precincts. George Prescott, who has not yet grown earthly enough, I suppose, to be debarred from occasional visits to Paradise, comes daily to bring three pints of milk from some ambrosial cow; occasionally, also, he makes an offering of mortal flowers. Mr. Emerson comes sometimes, and has been feasted on our nectar and ambrosia. Mr. Thoreau has twice listened to the music of the spheres, which, for our private convenience, we have packed into a musical-box. . . .

I must not forget to mention that the butcher comes twice or thrice a week; and we have so far improved upon the custom of Adam and Eve, that we generally furnish forth our feasts with portions of some delicate calf or lamb, whose unspotted innocence entitles them to the happiness of becoming our sustenance. Would that I were permitted to record the celestial dainties that kind Heaven provided for us on the first day of our arrival! Never, surely, was such food heard of on earth — at least, not by me. Well, the above-mentioned persons are nearly all that have entered into the hallowed shade of our avenue; except, indeed, a certain sinner who came to bargain for the grass in our orchard, and another who came with a new cistern. For it is one of the drawbacks upon our Eden that it contains no water fit either to drink or to bathe in; so that the showers have become, in good truth, a godsend.

I wonder why Providence does not cause a clear, cold fountain to bubble up at our doorstep; methinks it would not be unreasonable to pray for such a favor. At present we are under the ridiculous necessity of sending to the outer world for water. Only imagine Adam trudging out of Paradise with a bucket in each hand, to get water to drink, or for Eve to bathe in! Intolerable! (though our stout handmaiden really fetches our water.) In other respects Providence has treated us pretty tolerably well; but here I shall expect something further to be done. Also, in the way of future favors, a kitten would be very acceptable. Animals (except, perhaps, a pig) seem never out of

place, even in the most paradisaical spheres. And, by the way, a young colt comes up our avenue, now and then, to crop the seldom-trodden herbage; and so does a company of cows, whose sweet breath well repays us for the food which they obtain. There are likewise a few hens, whose quiet cluck is heard pleasantly about the house. A black dog sometimes stands at the farther extremity of the avenue, and looks wistfully hitherward; but when I whistle to him, he puts his tail between his legs, and trots away. Foolish dog! if he had more faith, he should have bones enough.

The scenery of Concord, as I beheld it from the summit of the hill, has no very marked characteristics, but has a great deal of quiet beauty, in keeping with the river. There are broad and peaceful meadows, which, I think, are among the most satisfying objects in natural scenery. The heart reposes on them with a feeling that few things else can give, because almost all other objects are abrupt and clearly defined; but a meadow stretches out like a small infinity, yet with a secure homeliness which we do not find either in an expanse of water or of air. The hills which border these meadows are wide swells of land, or long and gradual ridges, some of them densely covered with wood. The white village, at a distance on the left, appears to be embosomed among wooded hills. The verdure of the country is much more perfect than is usual at this season of the year, when the autumnal hue has generally made considerable progress over trees and grass. Last evening, after the copious showers of the

preceding two days, it was worthy of early June, or, indeed, of a world just created. Had I not then been alone, I should have had a far deeper sense of beauty, for I should have looked through the medium of another spirit. Along the horizon there were masses of those deep clouds in which the fancy may see images of all things that ever existed or were dreamed of. Over our old manse, of which I could catch but a glimpse among its embowering trees, appeared the immensely gigantic figure of a hound, crouching down with head erect, as if keeping watchful guard while the master of the mansion was away. . . . How sweet it was to draw near my own home, after having lived homeless in the world so long! . . . With thoughts like these, I descended the hill, and clambered over the stone-wall, and crossed the road, and passed up our avenue, while the quaint old house put on an aspect of welcome.

Notwithstanding all we have done to modernize the old place, we seem scarcely to have disturbed its air of antiquity. It is evident that other wedded pairs have spent their honeymoons here, that children have been born here, and people have grown old and died in these rooms, although for our behoof the same apartments have consented to look cheerful once again. Then there are dark closets, and strange nooks and corners, where the ghosts of former occupants might hide themselves in the daytime, and stalk forth when night conceals all our sacrilegious improvements.

Externally the house presents the same appearance as in the Doctor's day. It had once a coat of white

paint; but the storms and sunshine of many years have almost obliterated it, and produced a sober, grayish hue, which entirely suits the antique form of the structure. To repaint its reverend face would be a real sacrilege. It would look like old Dr. Ripley in a brown wig. I hardly know why it is that our cheerful and lightsome repairs and improvements in the interior of the house seem to be in perfectly good taste, though the heavy old beams and high wainscoting of the walls speak of ages gone by. But so it is. The cheerful paper-hangings have the air of belonging to the old walls; and such modernisms as astral lamps, card-tables, gilded Cologne-bottles, silver taper-stands, and bronze and alabaster flower-vases do not seem at all impertinent. It is thus that an aged man may keep his heart warm for new things and new friends, and often furnish himself anew with ideas; though it would not be graceful for him to attempt to suit his exterior to the passing fashions of the day.

My life, at this time, is more like that of a boy, externally, than it has been since I was really a boy. It is usually supposed that the cares of life come with matrimony; but I seem to have cast off all care, and live on with as much easy trust in Providence as Adam could possibly have felt before he had learned that there was a world beyond Paradise. My chief anxiety consists in watching the prosperity of my vegetables, in observing how they are affected by the rain or sunshine, in lamenting the blight of one squash and rejoicing at the luxurious growth of another. It is as if the original relation between man and Nature

were restored in my case, and as if I were to look exclusively to her for the support of my Eve and myself — to trust to her for food and clothing, and all things needful, with the full assurance that she would not fail me. The fight with the world — the struggle of a man among men — the agony of the universal effort to wrench the means of living from a host of greedy competitors — all this seems like a dream to me. My business is merely to live and to enjoy; and whatever is essential to life and enjoyment will come as naturally as the dew from heaven. This is, practically at least, my faith. And so I awake in the morning with a boyish thoughtlessness as to how the outgoings of the day are to be provided for, and its in-comings rendered certain.

After breakfast, I go forth into my garden, and gather whatever the bountiful Mother has made fit for our present sustenance; and of late days she generally gives me two squashes and a cucumber, and promises me green corn and shell-beans very soon. Then I pass down through our orchard to the river-side, and ramble along its margin in search of flowers. Usually I discern a fragrant white lily, here and there along the shore, growing, with sweet prudishness, beyond the grasp of mortal arm. But it does not escape me so. I know what is its fitting destiny better than the silly flower knows for itself; so I wade in, heedless of wet trousers, and seize the shy lily by its slender stem. Thus I make prize of five or six, which are as many as usually blossom within my reach in a single morning; — some of them partially

worm-eaten or blighted, like virgins with an eating sorrow at the heart; others as fair and perfect as Nature's own idea was, when she first imagined this lovely flower. A perfect pond-lily is the most satisfactory of flowers. Besides these, I gather whatever else of beautiful chances to be growing in the moist soil by the river-side — an amphibious tribe, yet with more richness and grace than the wild-flowers of the deep and dry woodlands and hedge-rows — sometimes the white arrow-head, always the blue spires and broad green leaves of the pickerel-flower, which contrast and harmonize so well with the white lilies. For the last two or three days, I have found scattered stalks of the cardinal-flower, the gorgeous scarlet of which it is a joy even to remember. The world is made brighter and sunnier by flowers of such a hue. Even perfume, which otherwise is the soul and spirit of a flower, may be spared when it arrays itself in this scarlet glory. It is a flower of thought and feeling, too; it seems to have its roots deep down in the hearts of those who gaze at it. Other bright flowers sometimes impress me as wanting sentiment; but it is not so with this.

Well, having made up my bunch of flowers, I return home with them. . . . Then I ascend to my study, and generally read, or perchance scribble in this journal, and otherwise suffer Time to loiter onward at his own pleasure, till the dinner-hour. In pleasant days, the chief event of the afternoon, and the happiest one of the day, is our walk. . . . So comes the night; and I look back upon a day spent in what the world would

call idleness, and for which I myself can suggest no more appropriate epithet, but which, nevertheless, I cannot feel to have been spent amiss. True, it might be a sin and shame, in such a world as ours, to spend a lifetime in this manner; but for a few summer weeks it is good to live as if this world were heaven. And so it is, and so it shall be, although, in a little while, a flitting shadow of earthly care and toil will mingle itself with our realities.

CHAPTER X

GUESTS AT THE MANSE

George Hillard and his wife arrived from Boston in the dusk of Saturday evening to spend Sunday with us. It was a pleasant sensation, when the coach rumbled up our avenue, and wheeled round at our door; for I felt that I was regarded as a man with a household — a man having a tangible existence and locality in the world — when friends came to avail themselves of our hospitality. It was a sort of acknowledgment and reception of us into the corps of married people,— a sanction by no means essential to our peace and well-being, but yet agreeable enough to receive. So we welcomed them cordially at the door, and ushered them into our parlor, and soon into the supper-room. . . . The night flitted over us all, and passed away, and up rose a gray and sullen morning . . . and we had a splendid breakfast of flapjacks, or slapjacks, and whortleberries, which I gathered on a neighboring hill, and perch, bream, and pout, which I hooked out of the river the evening before. About nine o'clock, Hillard and I set out for a walk to Walden Pond, calling by the way at Mr. Emerson's, to obtain his guidance or directions, and he accompanied us in his own illustrious person.

We proceeded through wood-paths to Walden Pond, picking blackberries of enormous size along the way. The pond itself was beautiful and refreshing to

my soul, after such long and exclusive familiarity with our tawny and sluggish river. It lies embosomed among wooded hills — it is not very extensive, but large enough for waves to dance upon its surface, and to look like a piece of blue firmament, earth-encircled. The shore has a narrow, pebbly strand, which it was worth a day's journey to look at, for the sake of the contrast between it and the weedy, oozy margin of the river. Farther within its depths, you perceive a bottom of pure white sand, sparkling through the transparent water, which, methought, was the very purest liquid in the world. After Mr. Emerson left us, Hillard and I bathed in the pond, and it does really seem as if my spirit, as well as corporeal person, were refreshed by that bath. A good deal of mud and river slime had accumulated on my soul; but these bright waters washed them all away.

I took a walk through the woods yesterday afternoon, to Mr. Emerson's, with a book which Margaret Fuller had left, after a call on Saturday eve. I missed the nearest way, and wandered into a very secluded portion of the forest; for forest it might justly be called, so dense and sombre was the shade of oaks and pines. Once I wandered into a tract so overgrown with bushes and underbrush that I could scarcely force a passage through. Nothing is more annoying than a walk of this kind, where one is tormented by an innumerable host of petty impediments. It incenses and depresses me at the same time. Always when I flounder into the midst of bushes, which cross and intertwine themselves about my legs, and brush my

face, and seize hold of my clothes, with their multitudinous grip — always, in such a difficulty, I feel as if it were almost as well to lie down and die in rage and despair as to go one step farther. It is laughable, after I have got out of the moil, to think how miserably it affected me for the moment; but I had better learn patience betimes, for there are many such bushy tracts in this vicinity, on the margins of meadows, and my walks will often lead me into them.

After leaving the book at Mr. Emerson's I returned through the woods, and, entering Sleepy Hollow, I perceived a lady reclining near the path which bends along its verge. It was Margaret herself. She had been there the whole afternoon, meditating or reading; for she had a book in her hand, with some strange title, which I did not understand, and have forgotten. She said that nobody had broken her solitude, and was just giving utterance to a theory that no inhabitant of Concord ever visited Sleepy Hollow, when we saw a group of people entering the sacred precincts. Most of them followed a path which led them away from us; but an old man passed near us, and smiled to see Margaret reclining on the ground, and me sitting by her side. He made some remark about the beauty of the afternoon, and withdrew himself into the shadow of the wood. Then we talked about autumn, and about the pleasures of being lost in the woods, and about the crows, whose voices Margaret had heard; and about the experiences of early childhood, whose influence remains upon the character after the recollection of them has passed away; and about the

sight of mountains from a distance, and the view from their summits; and about other matters of high and low philosophy. In the midst of our talk, we heard footsteps above us, on the high bank; and while the person was still hidden among the trees, he called to Margaret, of whom he had gotten a glimpse. Then he emerged from the green shade, and, behold! it was Mr. Emerson. He appeared to have had a pleasant time; for he said that there were Muses in the woods to-day, and whispers to be heard in the breezes. It being now nearly six o'clock, we separated — Margaret and Mr. Emerson towards his home, and I towards mine.

Last evening there was the most beautiful moonlight that ever hallowed this earthly world; and when I went to bathe in the river, which was as calm as death, it seemed like plunging down into the sky. But I had rather be on earth than even in the seventh heaven, just now.

I left home at five o'clock this morning to catch some fish for breakfast. I shook our summer apple-tree, and ate the golden apple which fell from it. Methinks these early apples, which come as a golden promise before the treasures of autumnal fruit, are almost more delicious than anything that comes afterwards. We have but one such tree in our orchard; but it supplies us with a daily abundance, and probably will do so for at least a week to come. Meantime other trees begin to cast their ripening windfalls upon the grass; and when I taste them, and perceive their mellowed flavor and blackening seeds, I feel somewhat overwhelmed with the impending bounties

of Providence. I suppose Adam, in Paradise, did not like to see his fruits decaying on the ground, after he had watched them through the sunny days of the world's first summer. However, insects, at the worst, will hold a festival upon them, so that they will not be thrown away, in the great scheme of Nature. Moreover, I have one advantage over the primeval Adam, inasmuch as there is a chance of disposing of my superfluous fruits among people who inhabit no Paradise of their own.

Passing a little way down along the river-side, I threw in my line, and soon drew out one of the smallest possible of fishes. It seemed to be a pretty good morning for the angler — an autumnal coolness in the air, a clear sky, but with a fog across the lowlands and on the surface of the river, which a gentle breeze sometimes condensed into wreaths. At first I could barely discern the opposite shore of the river; but, as the sun arose, the vapors gradually dispersed, till only a warm, smoky tint was left along the water's surface. The farm-houses across the river made their appearance out of the dusky cloud; the voices of boys were heard, shouting to the cattle as they drove them to the pastures; a man whetted his scythe, and set to work in a neighboring meadow. Meantime, I continued to stand on the oozy margin of the stream, beguiling the little fish; and though the scaly inhabitants of our river partake somewhat of the character of their native element, and are but sluggish biters, still I contrived to pull out not far from two dozen. They were all bream, a broad, flat, almost circular

SEAT AT 'THE WAYSIDE'

fish, shaped a good deal like a flounder, but swimming on their edges, instead of on their sides. As far as mere pleasure is concerned, it is hardly worth while to fish in our river, it is so much like angling in a mud-puddle; and one does not attach the idea of freshness and purity to the fishes, as we do to those which inhabit swift, transparent streams, or haunt the shores of the great briny deep. Standing on the weedy margin, and throwing the line over the elder-bushes that dip into the water, it seems as if we could catch nothing but frogs and mud-turtles, or reptiles akin to them. And even when a fish of reputable aspect is drawn out, one feels a shyness about touching him. As to our river, its character was admirably expressed last night by some one who said 'it was too lazy to keep itself clean.' I might write pages and pages, and only obscure the impression which this brief sentence conveys. Nevertheless, we made bold to eat some of my fish for breakfast, and found them very savory; and the rest shall meet with due entertainment at dinner, together with some shell-beans, green corn, and cucumbers from our garden; so this day's food comes directly and entirely from beneficent Nature, without the intervention of any third person between her and us.

I was promised, in the midst of Sunday's rain, that Monday should be fair, and, behold! the sun came back to us, and brought one of the most perfect days ever made; . . . it seemed as if the world was newly created yesterday morning, and I beheld its birth; for I had risen before the sun was over the hill, and

had gone forth to fish. How instantaneously did all dreariness and heaviness of the earth's spirit flit away before one smile of the beneficent sun! This proves that all gloom is but a dream and a shadow, and that cheerfulness is the real truth. It requires many clouds, long brooding over us, to make us sad, but one gleam of sunshine always suffices to cheer up the landscape.

Mr. Thoreau dined with us yesterday. . . . He is a keen and delicate observer of nature — a genuine observer — which, I suspect, is almost as rare a character as even an original poet; and Nature, in return for his love, seems to adopt him as her especial child, and shows him secrets which few others are allowed to witness. He is familiar with beast, fish, fowl, and reptile, and has strange stories to tell of adventures and friendly passages with these lower brethren of mortality. Herb and flower, likewise, wherever they grow, whether in garden or wildwood, are his familiar friends. He is also on intimate terms with the clouds, and can tell the portents of storms. It is a characteristic trait, that he has a great regard for the memory of the Indian tribes, whose wild life would have suited him so well; and, strange to say, he seldom walks over a ploughed field without picking up an arrow-point, spearhead, or other relic of the red man, as if their spirits willed him to be the inheritor of their simple wealth.

With all this he has more than a tincture of literature — a deep and true taste for poetry, especially for the elder poets, and he is a good writer — at least he has written a good article, a rambling disquisition on

Natural History, in the last 'Dial,' which, he says, was chiefly made up from journals of his own observations. Methinks this article gives a very fair image of his mind and character — so true, innate, and literal in observation, yet giving the spirit as well as letter of what he sees, even as a lake reflects its wooded banks, showing every leaf, yet giving the wild beauty of the whole scene. Then there are in the article passages of cloudy and dreamy metaphysics, and also passages where his thoughts seem to measure and attune themselves into spontaneous verse, as they rightfully may, since there is real poetry in them. There is a basis of good sense and of moral truth, too, throughout the article, which also is a reflection of his character; for he is not unwise to think and feel, and I find him a healthy and wholesome man to know.

After dinner (at which we cut the first watermelon and muskmelon that our garden has grown), Mr. Thoreau and I walked up the bank of the river, and at a certain point he shouted for his boat. Forthwith a young man paddled it across, and Mr. Thoreau and I voyaged farther up the stream, which soon became more beautiful than any picture, with its dark and quiet sheet of water, half shaded, half sunny, between high and wooded banks. The late rains have swollen the stream so much that many trees are standing up to their knees, as it were, in the water, and boughs, which lately swung high in air, now dip and drink deep of the passing wave. As to the poor cardinals which glowed upon the bank a few days since, I could see only a few of their scarlet hats, peeping above the

tide. Mr. Thoreau managed the boat so perfectly either with two paddles or with one, that it seemed instinct with his own will, and to require no physical effort to guide it. He said that, when some Indians visited Concord a few years ago, he found that he had acquired, without a teacher, their precise method of propelling and steering a canoe. Nevertheless he was desirous of selling the boat of which he was so fit a pilot, and which was built by his own hands; so I agreed to take it, and accordingly became possessor of the Musketaquid. I wish I could acquire the aquatic skill of the original owner.

I made a voyage in the Pond-Lily all by myself yesterday morning, and was much encouraged by my success in causing the boat to go whither I would. I have always liked to be afloat, but I think I have never adequately conceived of the enjoyment till now, when I begin to feel a power over that which supports me. I suppose I must have felt something like this sense of triumph when I first learned to swim; but I have forgotten it. O that I could run wild! — that is, that I could put myself into a true relation with Nature, and be on friendly terms with all congenial elements.

We had a thunder-storm last evening; and to-day has been a cool, breezy autumnal day, such as my soul and body love.

I never could have conceived that there was so beautiful a river-scene in Concord as this of the North Branch. The stream flows through the midmost privacy and deepest heart of a wood, which, as if but half satisfied with its presence, calm, gentle, and unob-

trusive as it is, seems to crowd upon it, and barely to allow it passage; for the trees are rooted on the very verge of the water, and dip their pendent branches into it. On one side there is a high bank, forming the side of a hill, the Indian name of which I have forgotten, though Mr. Thoreau told it to me; and here, in some instances, the trees stand leaning over the river, stretching out their arms as if about to plunge in headlong. On the other side, the bank is almost on a level with the water; and there the quiet congregation of trees stood with feet in the flood, and fringed with foliage down to its very surface. Vines here and there twine themselves about bushes or aspens or alder-trees, and hang their clusters (though scanty and infrequent this season) so that I can reach them from my boat. I scarcely remember a scene of more complete and lovely seclusion than the passage of the river through this wood. Even an Indian canoe, in olden times, could not have floated onward in deeper solitude than my boat. I have never elsewhere had such an opportunity to observe how much more beautiful reflection is than what we call reality. The sky, and the clustering foliage on either hand, and the effect of sunlight as it found its way through the shade, giving lightsome hues in contrast with the quiet depth of the prevailing tints — all these seemed unsurpassably beautiful when beheld in upper air. But on gazing downward, there they were, the same even to the minutest particular, yet arrayed in ideal beauty, which satisfied the spirit incomparably more than the actual scene. I am half convinced that the

reflection is indeed the reality, the real thing which Nature imperfectly images to our grosser sense. At any rate, the disembodied shadow is nearest to the soul.

On my return, I suffered the boat to float almost of its own will down the stream, and caught fish enough for this morning's breakfast. But, partly from a qualm of conscience, I finally put them all into the water again, and saw them swim away as if nothing had happened.

This is a glorious day — bright, very warm, yet with an unspeakable gentleness both in its warmth and brightness. On such days it is impossible not to love Nature, for she evidently loves us. At other seasons she does not give me this impression, or only at very rare intervals; but in these happy, autumnal days, when she has perfected the harvests, and accomplished every necessary thing that she had to do, she overflows with a blessed superfluity of love. It is good to be alive now. Thank God for breath — yes, for mere breath! when it is made up of such a heavenly breeze as this. It comes to the cheek with a real kiss; it would linger fondly around us, if it might; but, since it must be gone, it caresses us with its whole kindly heart, and passes onward, to caress likewise the next thing that it meets. There is a pervading blessing diffused over all the world. I look out of the window and think, 'O perfect day! O beautiful world! O good God!' And such a day is the promise of a blissful eternity. Our Creator would never have made such weather, and given us the deep heart to enjoy it, above

and beyond all thought, if he had not meant us to be immortal. It opens the gates of heaven, and gives us glimpses far inward.

Yesterday afternoon I took a solitary walk to Walden Pond. It was a cool, windy day, with heavy clouds rolling and tumbling about the sky, but still a prevalence of genial autumn sunshine. The fields are still green, and the great masses of the woods have not yet assumed their many-colored garments; but here and there are solitary oaks of deep, substantial red, or maples of a more brilliant hue, or chestnuts either yellow or of a tenderer green than in summer. Some trees seem to return to their hue of May or early June before they put on the brighter autumnal tints. In some places, along the borders of low and moist land, a whole range of trees were clothed in the perfect gorgeousness of autumn, of all shades of brilliant color, looking like the palette on which Nature was arranging the tints wherewith to paint a picture. These hues appeared to be thrown together without design; and yet there was perfect harmony among them, and a softness and a delicacy made up of a thousand different brightnesses. There is not, I think, so much contrast among these colors as might at first appear. The more you consider them, the more they seem to have one element among them all, which is the reason that the most brilliant display of them soothes the observer, instead of exciting him. And I know not whether it be more a moral effect or a physical one, operating merely on the eye; but it is a pensive gayety, which causes a sigh often, and never a smile. We

never fancy, for instance, that these gayly clad trees might be changed into young damsels in holiday attire, and betake themselves to dancing on the plain. If they were to undergo such a transformation, they would surely arrange themselves in funeral procession, and go sadly along, with their purple and scarlet and golden garments trailing over the withering grass. When the sunshine falls upon them, they seem to smile; but it is as if they were heart-broken. But it is in vain for me to attempt to describe these autumnal brilliancies, or to convey the impression which they make on me. I have tried a thousand times, and always without the slightest self-satisfaction. Fortunately there is no need of such a record, for Nature renews the picture year after year; and even when we shall have passed away from the world, we can spiritually create these scenes, so that we may dispense with all efforts to put them into words.

Walden Pond was clear and beautiful as usual. It tempted me to bathe; and, though the water was thrillingly cold, it was like the thrill of a happy death. Never was there such transparent water as this. I threw sticks into it, and saw them float suspended on an almost invisible medium. It seemed as if the pure air were beneath them, as well as above. It is fit for baptisms; but one would not wish it to be polluted by having sins washed into it. None but angels should bathe in it; but blessed babies might be dipped into its bosom.

According to my invariable custom, I mistook my way, and, emerging upon the road, I turned my back

instead of my face towards Concord, and walked on very diligently till a guide-board informed me of my mistake. I then turned about, and was shortly overtaken by an old yeoman in a chaise, who kindly offered me a drive, and soon set me down in the village.

CHAPTER XI

UPSTREAM AND FAREWELL

Blessed was the sunshine when it came again at the close of another stormy day, beaming from the edge of the western horizon; while the massive firmament of clouds threw down all the gloom it could, but served only to kindle the golden light into a more brilliant glow by the strongly contrasted shadows. Heaven smiled at the earth, so long unseen, from beneath its heavy eyelid. To-morrow for the hill-tops and the wood-paths.

Or it might be that Ellery Channing came up the avenue to join me in a fishing excursion on the river. Strange and happy times were those when we cast aside all irksome forms and strait-laced habitudes, and delivered ourselves up to the free air, to live like the Indians or any less conventional race during one bright semicircle of the sun. Rowing our boat against the current, between wide meadows, we turned aside into the Assabeth. A more lovely stream than this, for a mile above its junction with the Concord, has never flowed on earth — nowhere, indeed, except to lave the interior regions of a poet's imagination. It is sheltered from the breeze by woods and a hill-side; so that elsewhere there might be a hurricane, and here scarcely a ripple across the shaded water. The current lingers along so gently that the mere force of the boatman's will seems sufficient to propel his craft

against it. It comes flowing softly through the midmost privacy and deepest heart of a wood which whispers it to be quiet; while the stream whispers back again from its sedgy borders, as if river and wood were hushing one another to sleep. Yes; the river sleeps along its course and dreams of the sky and of the clustering foliage, amid which fall showers of broken sunlight, imparting specks of vivid cheerfulness, in contrast with the quiet depth of the prevailing tint. Of all this scene, the slumbering river has a dream picture in its bosom.

Gentle and unobtrusive as the river is, yet the tranquil woods seem hardly satisfied to allow it passage. The trees are rooted on the very verge of the water, and dip their pendent branches into it. At one spot there is a lofty bank, on the slope of which grow some hemlocks, declining across the stream with outstretched arms, as if resolute to take the plunge. In other places the banks are almost on a level with the water; so that the quiet congregation of trees set their feet in the flood, and are fringed with foliage down to the surface. Cardinal flowers kindle their spiral flames and illuminate the dark nooks among the shrubbery. The pond-lily grows abundantly along the margin — that delicious flower, which, as Thoreau tells me, opens its virgin bosom to the first sunlight and perfects its being through the magic of that genial kiss. He has beheld beds of them unfolding in due succession as the sunrise stole gradually from flower to flower — a sight not to be hoped for unless when a poet adjusts his inward eye to a proper focus with the

outward organ. Grape-vines here and there twine themselves around shrub and tree and hang their clusters over the water within reach of the boatman's hand. Oftentimes they unite two trees of alien race in an inextricable twine, marrying the hemlock and the maple against their will, and enriching them with a purple offspring of which neither is the parent. One of these ambitious parasites has climbed into the upper branches of a tall, white pine, and is still ascending from bough to bough, unsatisfied till it shall crown the tree's airy summit with a wreath of its broad foliage and a cluster of its grapes.

The winding course of the stream continually shut out the scene behind us, and revealed as calm and lovely a one before. We glided from depth to depth, and breathed new seclusion at every turn. The shy kingfisher flew from the withered branch close at hand to another at a distance, uttering a shrill cry of anger or alarm. Ducks that had been floating there since the preceding eve were startled at our approach, and skimmed along the glassy river, breaking its dark surface with a bright streak. The pickerel leaped from among the lily-pads. The turtle, sunning itself upon a rock or at the root of a tree, slid suddenly into the water with a plunge. The painted Indian who paddled his canoe along the Assabeth three hundred years ago could hardly have seen a wilder gentleness displayed upon its banks and reflected in its bosom than we did. Nor could the same Indian have prepared his noontide meal with more simplicity. We drew up our skiff at some point where the overarching

shade formed a natural bower, and there kindled a fire with the pine cones and decayed branches that lay strewn plentifully around. Soon the smoke ascended among the trees, impregnated with a savory incense, not heavy, dull, and surfeiting, like the steam of cookery within doors, but sprightly and piquant. The smell of our feast was akin to the woodland odors with which it mingled: there was no sacrilege committed by our intrusion there: the sacred solitude was hospitable, and granted us free leave to cook and eat in the recess that was at once our kitchen and banqueting hall. It is strange what humble offices may be performed in a beautiful scene without destroying its poetry. Our fire, red gleaming among the trees, and we beside it, busied with culinary rites and spreading out our meal on a mossgrown log, all seemed in unison with the river gliding by and the foliage rustling over us. And, what was strangest, neither did our mirth seem to disturb the propriety of the solemn woods; although the hobgoblins of the old wilderness and the will-of-the-wisps that glimmered in the marshy places might have come trooping to share our table talk, and have added their shrill laughter to our merriment. It was the very spot in which to utter the extremest nonsense or the profoundest wisdom, or that ethereal product of the mind which partakes of both, and may become one or the other, in correspondence with the faith and insight of the auditor.

So amid sunshine and shadow, rustling leaves and sighing waters, up gushed our talk like the babble of a fountain. The evanescent spray was Ellery's; and

his, too, the lumps of golden thought that lay glimmering in the fountain's bed and brightened both our faces by the reflection. Could he have drawn out that virgin gold and stamped it with the mint mark that alone gives currency, the world might have had the profit, and he the fame. My mind was the richer merely by the knowledge that it was there. But the chief profit of those wild days to him and me lay, not in any definite idea, not in any angular or rounded truth, which we dug out of the shapeless mass of problematical stuff, but in the freedom which we thereby won from all custom and conventionalism and fettering influences of man on man. We were so free to-day that it was impossible to be slaves again to-morrow. When we crossed the threshold of the house or trod the thronged pavements of a city, still the leaves of the trees that overhang the Assabeth were whispering to us, 'Be free! be free!' Therefore along that shady river-bank there are spots, marked with a heap of ashes and half-consumed brands, only less sacred in my remembrance than the hearth of a household fire.

And yet how sweet, as we floated homeward adown the golden river at sunset — how sweet was it to return within the system of human society, not as to a dungeon and a chain, but as to a stately edifice, whence we could go forth at will into statelier simplicity! How gently, too, did the sight of the Old Manse, best seen from the river, overshadowed with its willow and all environed about with the foliage of its orchard and avenue — how gently did its gray, homely aspect rebuke the speculative extravagances

of the day! It had grown sacred in connection with the artificial life against which we inveighed; it had been a home for many years in spite of all; it was my home too; and, with these thoughts, it seemed to me that all the artifice and conventionalism of life was but an impalpable thinness upon its surface, and that the depth below was none the worse for it. Once, as we turned our boat to the bank, there was a cloud, in the shape of an immensely gigantic figure of a hound, couched above the house, as if keeping guard over it. Gazing at this symbol, I prayed that the upper influences might long protect the institutions that had grown out of the heart of mankind.

If ever my readers should decide to give up civilized life, cities, houses, and whatever moral or material enormities in addition to these the perverted ingenuity of our race has contrived, let it be in the early autumn. Then Nature will love him better than at any other season, and will take him to her bosom with a more motherly tenderness. I could scarcely endure the roof of the old house above me in those first autumnal days. How early in the summer, too, the prophecy of autumn comes! Earlier in some years than in others; sometimes even in the first weeks of July. There is no other feeling like what is caused by this faint, doubtful, yet real perception — if it be not rather a foreboding — of the year's decay, so blessedly sweet and sad in the same breath.

Did I say that there was no feeling like it? Ah, but there is a half-acknowledged melancholy like to this when we stand in the perfected vigor of our life and

feel that Time has now given us all his flowers, and that the next work of his never idle fingers must be to steal them one by one away.

I have forgotten whether the song of the cricket be not as early a token of autumn's approach as any other — that song which may be called an audible stillness; for though very loud and heard afar, yet the mind does not take note of it as a sound, so completely is its individual existence merged among the accompanying characteristics of the season. Alas for the pleasant summer time! In August the grass is still verdant on the hills and in the valleys; the foliage of the trees is as dense as ever, and as green; the flowers gleam forth in richer abundance along the margin of the river, and by the stone walls, and deep among the woods; the days, too, are as fervid now as they were a month ago; and yet in every breath of wind and in every beam of sunshine we hear the whispered farewell and behold the parting smile of a dear friend. There is a coolness amid all the heat, a mildness in the blazing noon. Not a breeze can stir but it thrills us with the breath of autumn. A pensive glory is seen in the far golden gleams, among the shadows of the trees. The flowers — even the brightest of them, and they are the most gorgeous of the year — have this gentle sadness wedded to their pomp, and typify the character of the delicious time each within itself. The brilliant cardinal flower has never seemed gay to me.

By and by, in a little time, the outward world puts on a drear austerity. On some October morning there is a heavy hoar-frost on the grass and along the tops of

the fences; and at sunrise the leaves fall from the trees of our avenue without a breath of wind, quietly descending by their own weight. All summer long they have murmured like the noise of waters; they have roared loudly while the branches were wrestling with the thunder gust; they have made music both glad and solemn; they have attuned my thoughts by their quiet sound as I paced to and fro beneath the arch of intermingling boughs. Now they can only rustle under my feet. Henceforth the gray parsonage begins to assume a larger importance, and draws to its fireside — for the abomination of the air-tight stove is reserved till wintry weather — draws closer and closer to its fireside the vagrant impulses that had gone wandering about through the summer.

When summer was dead and buried the Old Manse became as lonely as a hermitage. Not that ever — in my time at least — it had been thronged with company; but, at no rare intervals, we welcomed some friend out of the dusty glare and tumult of the world, and rejoiced to share with him the transparent obscurity that was floating over us. In one respect our precincts were like the Enchanted Ground through which the pilgrim travelled on his way to the Celestial City! The guests, each and all, felt a slumberous influence upon them; they fell asleep in chairs, or took a more deliberate siesta on the sofa, or were seen stretched among the shadows of the orchard, looking up dreamily through the boughs. They could not have paid a more acceptable compliment to my abode, nor to my own qualities as a host. I held it as a proof

that they left their cares behind them as they passed between the stone gate-posts at the entrance of our avenue, and that the so powerful opiate was the abundance of peace and quiet within and all around us. Others could give them pleasure and amusement or instruction — these could be picked up anywhere; but it was for me to give them rest — rest in a life of trouble. What better could be done for those weary and world-worn spirits? — for him whose career of perpetual action was impeded and harassed by the rarest of his powers and the richest of his acquirements? — for another who had thrown his ardent heart from earliest youth into the strife of politics, and now, perchance, began to suspect that one lifetime is too brief for the accomplishment of any lofty aim? — for her on whose feminine nature had been imposed the heavy gift of intellectual power, such as a strong man might have staggered under, and with it the necessity to act upon the world? — in a word, not to multiply instances, what better could be done for anybody who came within our magic circle than to throw the spell of a tranquil spirit over him? And when it had wrought its full effect, then we dismissed him, with but misty reminiscences, as if he had been dreaming of us.

Were I to adopt a pet idea, as so many people do, and fondle it in my embraces to the exclusion of all others, it would be, that the great want which mankind labors under at this present period is sleep. The world should recline its vast head on the first convenient pillow and take an age-long nap. It has gone

distracted through a morbid activity, and, while preternaturally wide awake, is nevertheless tormented by visions that seem real to it now, but would assume their true aspect and character were all things once set right by an interval of sound repose. This is the only method of getting rid of old delusions and avoiding new ones; of regenerating our race, so that it might in due time awake as an infant out of dewy slumber; of restoring to us the simple perception of what is right, and the single-hearted desire to achieve it, both of which have long been lost in consequence of this weary activity of brain and torpor or passion of the heart that now afflict the universe. Stimulants, the only mode of treatment hitherto attempted, cannot quell the disease; they do but heighten the delirium.

Let not the above paragraph ever be quoted against the author; for, though tinctured with its modicum of truth, it is the result and expression of what he knew, while he was writing, to be but a distorted survey of the state and prospects of mankind. There were circumstances around me which made it difficult to view the world precisely as it exists; for, severe and sober as was the Old Manse, it was necessary to go but a little way beyond its threshold before meeting with stranger moral shapes of men than might have been encountered elsewhere in a circuit of a thousand miles.

These hobgoblins of flesh and blood were attracted thither by the widespreading influence of a great original thinker, who had his earthly abode at the opposite extremity of our village. His mind acted upon

other minds of a certain constitution with wonderful magnetism, and drew many men upon long pilgrimages to speak with him face to face. Young visionaries — to whom just so much of insight had been imparted as to make life all a labyrinth around them — came to seek the clew that should guide them out of their self-involved bewilderment. Gray-headed theorists — whose systems, at first air, had finally imprisoned them in an iron frame-work — travelled painfully to his door, not to ask deliverance, but to invite the free spirit into their own thraldom. People that had lighted on a new thought, or a thought that they fancied new, came to Emerson, as the finder of a glittering gem hastens to a lapidary, to ascertain its quality and value. Uncertain, troubled, earnest wanderers through the midnight or the moral world beheld his intellectual fire as a beacon burning on a hill-top, and, climbing the difficult ascent, looked forth into the surrounding obscurity more hopefully than hitherto. The light revealed objects unseen before — mountains, gleaming lakes, glimpses of a creation among the chaos; but, also, as was unavoidable, it attracted bats and owls and the whole host of night birds, which flapped their dusky wings against the gazer's eyes, and sometimes were mistaken for fowls of angelic feather. Such delusions always hover nigh whenever a beacon fire of truth is kindled.

For myself, there had been epochs of my life when I, too, might have asked of this prophet the master word that should solve me the riddle of the universe; but now, being happy, I felt as if there were no ques-

tion to be put, and therefore admired Emerson as a poet of deep beauty and austere tenderness, but sought nothing from him as a philosopher. It was good, nevertheless, to meet him in the woodpaths, or sometimes in our avenue, with that pure intellectual gleam diffused about his presence like the garment of a shining one; and he so quiet, so simple, so without pretension, encountering each man alive as if expecting to receive more than he could impart. And, in truth, the heart of many an ordinary man had, perchance, inscriptions which he could not read. But it was impossible to dwell in his vicinity without inhaling more or less the mountain atmosphere of his lofty thought, which, in the brains of some people wrought a singular giddiness — new truth being as heady as new wine. Never was a poor little country village infested with such a variety of queer, strangely dressed, oddly behaved mortals, most of whom took upon themselves to be important agents of the world's destiny, yet were simply bores of a very intense water. Such, I imagine, is the invariable character of persons who crowd so closely about an original thinker as to draw in his unuttered breath and thus become imbued with a false originality. This triteness of novelty is enough to make any man of common sense blaspheme at all ideas of less than a century's standing, and pray that the world may be petrified and rendered immovable in precisely the worst moral and physical state that it ever yet arrived at, rather than be benefited by such schemes of such philosophers.

And now I begin to feel — and perhaps should have

sooner felt — that we have talked enough of the Old Manse. Mine honored reader, it may be, will vilify the poor author as an egotist for babbling through so many pages about a mossgrown country parsonage, and his life within its walls and on the river and in the woods, and the influences that wrought upon him from all these sources. My conscience, however, does not reproach me with betraying anything too sacredly individual to be revealed by a human spirit to its brother or sister spirit. How narrow — how shallow and scanty too — is the stream of thought that has been flowing from my pen, compared with the broad tide of dim emotions, ideas, and associations which swell around me from that portion of my existence! How little have I told! and of that little, how almost nothing is even tinctured with any quality that makes it exclusively my own! Has the reader gone wandering, hand in hand with me, through the inner passages of my being? and have we groped together into all its chambers and examined their treasures or their rubbish? Not so. We have been standing on the greensward, but just within the cavern's mouth, where the common sunshine is free to penetrate, and where every footstep is therefore free to come. I have appealed to no sentiment or sensibilities save such as are diffused among us all. So far as I am a man of really individual attributes I veil my face; nor am I, nor have I ever been, one of those supremely hospitable people who serve up their own hearts, delicately fried, with brain sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public.

Glancing back over what I have written, it seems

but the scattered reminiscences of a single summer. In fairyland there is no measurement of time; and, in a spot so sheltered from the turmoil of life's ocean, three years hastened away with a noiseless flight, as the breezy sunshine chases the cloud shadows across the depths of a still valley. Now came hints, growing more and more distinct, that the owner of the old house was pining for his native air. Carpenters next appeared, making a tremendous racket among the out-buildings, strewing the green grass with pine shavings and chips of chestnut joists, and vexing the whole antiquity of the place with their discordant renovations. Soon, moreover, they divested our abode of the veil of woodbine which had crept over a large portion of its southern face. All the aged mosses were cleared unsparingly away; and there were horrible whispers about brushing up the external walls with a coat of paint — a purpose as little to my taste as might be that of rouging the venerable cheeks of one's grandmother. But the hand that renovates is always more sacrilegious than that which destroys. In fine, we gathered up our household goods, drank a farewell cup of tea in our pleasant little breakfast room — delicately fragrant tea, an unpurchasable luxury, one of the many angel gifts that had fallen like dew upon us — and passed forth between the tall stone gate-posts as uncertain as the wandering Arabs where our tent might next be pitched. Providence took me by the hand, and — an oddity of dispensation which, I trust, there is no irreverence in smiling at — has led me, as the newspapers announce while I am writing,

from the Old Manse into a custom house. As a story-teller, I have often contrived strange vicissitudes for my imaginary personages, but none like this.

The treasure of intellectual good which I hoped to find in our secluded dwelling had never come to light. No profound treatise of ethics, no philosophic history, no novel even, that could stand unsupported on its edges. All that I had to show, as a man of letters, were these few tales and essays, which had blossomed out like flowers in the calm summer of my heart and mind. Save editing (an easy task) the journal of my friend of many years, the African Cruiser, I had done nothing else. With these idle weeds and withering blossoms I have intermixed some that were produced long ago — old, faded things, reminding me of flowers pressed between the leaves of a book — and now offer the bouquet, such as it is, to any whom it may please. These fitful sketches, with so little of external life about them, yet claiming no profundity of purpose — so reserved, even while they sometimes seem so frank — often but half in earnest, and never, even when most so, expressing satisfactorily the thoughts which they profess to image — such trifles, I truly feel, afford no solid basis for a literary reputation. Nevertheless, the public — if my limited number of readers, whom I venture to regard rather as a circle of friends, may be termed a public — will receive them the more kindly, as the last offering, the last collection, of this nature which it is my purpose ever to put forth. Unless I could do better, I have done enough in this kind. For myself the book will always retain one charm —

as reminding me of the river, with its delightful solitudes, and of the avenue, the garden, and the orchard, and especially the dear old Manse, with the little study on its western side, and the sunshine glimmering through the willow branches while I wrote.

THOREAU'S CONCORD

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord on July 12, 1817, in an old-fashioned house on the outskirts of the village, which has since been removed from its site. Always a devotee to the natural beauties of his native heath, he preferred it to all other localities and spent almost his entire life there, extolling its advantages on all occasions, and studying every inch of its woods and meadows, its ponds and riverways.

Concord, at the time of Thoreau's birth, was much as it had been when viewed by the eyes of the British troops in 1775. A daily stage-coach ran through from the westward as far as Keene, and Concord supplied a local coach, or wagon, to take the townspeople to Boston, either *via* Charlestown or over the Cambridge turnpike. Upon this road there was incessant travel, as Vermont and New Hampshire sent their farm products to Boston, breaking the journey at three taverns on the way, and faring homeward laden with dry-goods or wares from the West Indies.

All thrifty villagers of Concord kept live stock, and many drove their own horses and yokes of oxen. John Thoreau pastured his cow, as did his neighbors, and his little son Henry, a barefoot boy, was sent to drive home the cow at milking-time. But this boy, known to the family as 'David Henry,' was already looking out upon the world of Nature with an appre-

ciation quite apart from that of his barefoot companions, and at the age of ten was writing compositions picturing Nature, not as a background for youthful sport, but as a source of beauty and a bountiful provider for man's needs.

At the Concord Academy, which had been founded by the well-to-do men of the village in order that the children of Concord might be instructed in Latin, Greek, and French, Thoreau was fitted for Harvard College, where he graduated in 1837, at the age of twenty.

Although he claimed to hold colleges in small esteem, he undoubtedly owed much to his academic training. And if he won no special collegiate honors, he none the less profited by the superior libraries and by his opportunities for gaining a wider knowledge of the world's literature. Upon graduation, he joined his brother John in conducting a private school, which was given up because of the failing health of John Thoreau, who died in 1842. The income of the Thoreau family was dependent upon the pencil industry which they had established, and to this Henry applied himself, striving to improve the product, and declaring that he would make a 'perfect pencil.' The oft-quoted statement that, when congratulated upon this achievement, he responded that when this was accomplished he 'should never make another pencil,' seems to have been disproved by records which show that he continued to take part in this industry for twenty years, and in his journal of 1853 speaks of the manufacture of a thousand pencils which were disposed of at a great sacrifice in order to discharge a

debt. His improvements in this art were probably attained by grinding the plumbago finer, and by reducing its grittiness; moreover, from 1840 he had access to a superior mine of black lead in Canada.

At the time when other young men were choosing lucrative professions, Thoreau resisted all allurements in the direction of material advancement, and turned to Nature and its study as his chosen vocation, thus greatly disappointing his family. With his skill in woodcraft and ability to supply his wants with his own hands, he took up his independent life in the out-door world, supplementing his studies of Nature and his literary work, with the profession of land-surveyor. Meanwhile he determined to question every social usage, and to decide for himself what was essential to the life of a real man and what was merely artificial and superfluous.

He early began to keep a voluminous journal in which he set down most minute observations concerning his nature-study. His first book, 'A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers,' was founded upon an excursion which he took with his brother in 1839, in a boat built by themselves. This trip was extended to the summit of Mount Washington, and was the first of those mountain visits which later became a part of Thoreau's summer life.

The boat in which the brothers took their voyage upon the Concord and Merrimack Rivers was destined to pass into other distinguished hands, for when, three years later, Hawthorne brought his bride to the 'Old Manse,' he desired a boat, and in the spring

of 1843, Thoreau, grieving over the death of his brother with whom the boat was so closely associated, sold it to Hawthorne. The latter has commemorated it, in the 'Mosses from the Old Manse,' in which he pictures his memorable fishing-trips taken in company with his friend Ellery Channing, who, after Hawthorne left Concord, became the owner of the craft.

Although it was ten years after Thoreau's 'river voyage' that its story was given to the public, it served as an important step in the progress of Thoreau towards his life-work, which has been defined: 'that of an observer and recorder of outward nature, and a censor of human nature in himself and others.'

In 1845, Thoreau built himself a small frame house on the shores of Walden Pond, and there lived for two years a life of labor and study, at the end of which period he concluded that he had exhausted the advantages of solitude and abandoned his lonely existence. In 1847, not approving of some of the uses to which the public expenditure was applied, he refused to pay his town tax, and was in consequence put in jail from which he was later released when a friend insisted upon paying the tax for him.

Thoreau was short of stature, firmly built, and of light complexion, with serious blue eyes and a grave aspect; his senses were exceedingly acute and his frame well knit and robust. He could pace a given number of rods quite as accurately as another man could measure them with rod and chain, and he excelled as a swimmer, runner, boatman, and skater, and could outwalk most of his fellow townsmen.

THOREAU'S HOUSE AT WALDEN POND

Mrs. Hawthorne's graceful pen has furnished a vivid picture of Thoreau as one of a famous trio upon the ice in the winter of 1843–44: 'One afternoon Mr. Emerson and Mr. Thoreau went skating down the river from the Old Manse with Mr. Hawthorne. Henry Thoreau is an experienced skater, and was figuring dithyrambic dances and Bacchic leaps on the ice, remarkable but very ugly, methought. Next him followed Mr. Hawthorne, who, wrapped in his cloak, moved like a self-impelled Grecian statue, stately and grave. Mr. Emerson closed the line — evidently too weary to hold himself erect, pitching head foremost, half lying on the air.' This brief description offers a characteristic glimpse of each of the three skaters, all with superior intelligence within their heads, but varying in the adjustment of their heels upon the frozen river.

Thoreau's love for Concord, as has been noted, was one of his distinctive characteristics, and he delighted to discourse upon the superiority of his home environment. He declared that the flora of Massachusetts embraced almost all the important plants in America, and he returned 'Kane's Arctic Voyages,' to a friend, with the comment that 'most of the phenomena might be observed in Concord.'

Of this trait Emerson said: 'I think his fancy for referring everything to the meridian of Concord did not grow out of any ignorance or depreciation of other longitudes or latitudes, but was rather a playful expression of his conviction of the indifferency of all places, and that the best place for each is where he stands.'

Thoreau lived for two years at the Emerson home, during a part of which time Emerson was in Europe; then he returned to his father's home on the main street where he spent the remainder of his life in the house subsequently occupied by the Alcott family.

He was devoted to the study of the Indian, and was continually unearthing the Indian relics which abounded in Concord, while acquiring all possible information regarding the red man's life and traditions. He visited Maine chiefly to study the Indians there, desiring especially to learn just how they manufactured their canoes and how their flint arrow-heads had been produced. Those that walked with him found that he knew the country like a fox or bird, recognizing every track in the snow and knowing what creature had passed that way.

While he scoffed at conventional elegancies, it is said that he possessed many small refinements of his own. Thus, he could not bear to hear the sound of his own steps, the grit of the gravel; and therefore never willingly walked in the road, but in the grass, on mountains, and in the woods. His sense of smell was especially acute, revealing to him much that escaped the perception of others; he delighted in echoes, and in the musical sounds that were wafted to him direct from Nature.

In Emerson's summary of Thoreau's characteristics he says: 'He was bred to no profession; he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he drank no wine; he never knew the use of tobacco; and though a naturalist, he used neither

trap nor gun. He chose, wisely no doubt for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and Nature. He had no talent for wealth, and knew how to be poor without the least hint of squalor or inelegance. He had no temptations to fight against, no appetites, no passions, no taste for elegant trifles. . . . He chose to be rich by making his wants few.'

Thoreau regarded authorship as his special function in life, and worked strenuously to prepare himself for this vocation, leaving at the time of his death the substance of some thirty volumes, in his journals, but he did not regard authorship as a means of livelihood, supporting himself by his various earnings as schoolmaster, tutor, pencil-maker, lecturer, land-surveyor, and general-utility man. The two books published during his life, 'A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers,' and 'Walden,' were brought out at his own expense, and their wide popularity was not attained until long after his death. This occurred on May 6, 1862, after a lingering illness from consumption, which had previously afflicted several members of his family. His funeral oration was delivered by Emerson, who insisted that the ceremony should take place in the village church, from which Hawthorne had been buried. And in the course of his remarks on this occasion, Emerson said: 'The country knows not yet, or in the least part, how great a son it has lost. His soul was made for the noblest society; he had in a short life exhausted the capabilities of this world; wherever there is knowledge, wherever there is virtue, wherever there is beauty, he will find a home.'

THE FISHER'S BOY

My life is like a stroll upon the beach,
  As near the ocean's edge as I can go;
My tardy steps its waves sometimes o'erreach,
  Sometimes I stay to let them overflow.

My sole employment is, and scrupulous care,
  To place my gains beyond the reach of tides,
Each smoother pebble, and each shell more rare,
  Which ocean kindly to my hand confides.

I have but few companions on the shore:
  They scorn the strand who sail upon the sea;
Yet oft I think the ocean they've sailed o'er
  Is deeper known upon the strand to me.

The middle sea contains no crimson dulse,
  Its deeper waves cast up no pearls to view;
Along the shore my hand is on its pulse,
  And I converse with many a shipwrecked crew.

CHAPTER XII

PAST AND PRESENT

I THINK I could write a poem to be called 'Concord.' For argument I should have the River, the Woods, the Ponds, the Hills, the Fields, the Swamps and Meadows, the Streets and Buildings, and the Villagers. Then Morning, Noon, and Evening, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, Night, Indian Summer, and the Mountains in the Horizon.

A book should be so true as to be intimate and familiar to all men, as the sun to their faces — such a word as is occasionally uttered to a companion in the woods in summer, and both are silent.

As I pass along the streets of the village on the day of our annual fair, when the leaves strew the ground, I see how the trees keep just such a holiday all the year. The lively spirits of their sap mount higher than any ploughboy's let loose that day. A walk in the autumn woods, when, with serene courage, they are preparing for their winter campaign, if you have an ear for the rustling of their camp or an eye for the glancing of their armor, is more inspiring than the Greek or Peninsular war. Any grandeur may find society as great as itself in the forest.

When I walk in the fields of Concord and meditate on the destiny of this prosperous slip of the Saxon family, the unexhausted energies of this new country, I forget that this which is now Concord was once

Musketaquid, and that the American race has had its destiny also. Everywhere in the fields, in the corn and grain land, the earth is strewn with the relics of a race which has vanished as completely as if trodden in with the earth. I find it good to remember the eternity behind me as well as the eternity before. Wherever I go, I tread in the tracks of the Indian. I pick up the bolt which he has but just dropped at my feet. And if I consider destiny I am on his trail. I scatter his hearthstones with my feet, and pick out of the embers of his fire the simple but enduring implements of the wigwam and the chase. In planting my corn in the same furrow which yielded its increase to his support so long, I displace some memorial of him.

I have been walking this afternoon over a pleasant field planted with winter rye, near the house, where this strange people once had their dwelling-place. Another species of mortal men, but little less wild to me than the musquash they hunted. Strong spirits, dæmons, whose eyes could never meet mine; with another nature and another fate than mine. The crows flew over the edge of the woods, and, wheeling over my head, seemed to rebuke, as dark-winged spirits more akin to the Indian than I. Perhaps only the present disguise of the Indian. If the new has a meaning, so has the old. A blithe west wind is blowing over all. In the fine flowing haze, men at a distance seem shadowy and gigantic, as ill-defined and great as men should always be. I do not know if yonder be a man or a ghost.

It is now high time to look for arrow-heads, etc.

I spend many hours every spring gathering the crop which melting snow and rain have washed bare. When at length some island in the meadow or some sandy field elsewhere has been ploughed, perhaps for rye in the fall, I take note of it, and do not fail to repair thither as soon as the earth begins to be dry in the spring. If the spot chances never to have been cultivated before, I am the first to gather a crop from it. The farmer little thinks that another reaps a harvest which is the fruit of his toil. As much ground is turned up in a day by the plough as Indian implements could have turned over in a month, and my eyes rest on the evidences of an *aboriginal* life which passed here a thousand years ago, perchance. Especially if the knolls in the meadows are washed by a freshet where they have been ploughed the previous fall, the soil will be taken away lower down and the stones left, the arrow-heads, etc., and soapstone pottery amid them, somewhat as gold is washed in a dish or tom. I landed on two spots this P.M. and picked up a dozen arrow-heads. It is one of the regular pursuits of the spring. As sportsmen go in pursuit of duck and musquash, and scholars of rare books, and travellers of adventures, and poets of ideas, and all men of money, I go in search of arrow-heads when the season comes round again. So I help myself to live worthily, loving my life as I should.

Many as I have found, methinks the last one gave me about the same delight that the first did. Some time or other, you would say it rained arrow-heads, for they lie all over the surface of America. They are

sown like grain that is slow to germinate, broadcast over the earth. As the dragon's teeth bore a crop of soldiers, so these bear crops of philosophers and poets, and the same seed is just as good to plant again. It is stone fruit. Each one yields me a thought. It is humanity inscribed on the face of the earth. The red man, his mark!

I visited this afternoon Goodman's Hill in Sudbury, going through Lincoln over Sherman's Bridge and Round Hill, and returning through the Corner. It probably affords the best view of Concord River meadows of any hill. The horizon is very extensive as it is, and if the top were cleared so that you could get the western view, it would be one of the most extensive seen from any hill in the country. The most imposing horizons are those which are seen from tops of hills rising out of a river valley. The prospect even from a low hill has something majestic in it in such a case. The landscape is a vast amphitheatre rising to its rim in the horizon. I think that a river-valley town is much the handsomest and largest-featured — like Concord and Lancaster, for instance, natural centres.

I visited a retired, now almost unused, graveyard in Lincoln to-day, where five British soldiers lie buried who fell on the 19th April, '75. Edmund Wheeler, grandfather of William, who lived in the old house now pulled down near the present, went over the next day and carted them to this ground. A few years ago one Felch, a phrenologist, by leave of the selectmen dug up and took away two skulls. The skeletons were

very large, probably those of grenadiers. William Wheeler, who was present, told me this. He said that he had heard old Mr. Child, who lived opposite, say that when one soldier was shot he leaped right up his full length out of the ranks and fell dead; and he, William Wheeler, saw a bullet-hole through and through one of the skulls.

Close by stood a stone with this inscription:

In memory of
Sippio Brister
a man of Colour
who died
Nov. 1, 1820
ÆT. 64.

But that is not telling us that he lived.

An Irishman is digging a ditch for a foundation wall to a new shop where James Adams's shop stood. He tells me that he dug up three cannon-balls just in the rear of the shop lying within a foot of each other and about eighteen inches beneath the surface. I saw one of them, which was about three and a half inches in diameter and somewhat eaten with rust on one side. These were probably thrown into the pond by the British on the 19th of April, 1775. Shattuck says that five hundred pounds of balls were thrown into the pond and wells. These may have been dropped out the back window.

Minott says that G. M. Barrett told him that Amos Baker told him that during Concord Fight he went over behind the hill to the old Whittaker place (Sam Buttrick's) and stayed. Yet he was described as the

only survivor of Concord Fight. Received a pension for running away?

Looked at the old picture of Concord at Mrs. Brooks's — she says by a Minott, an uncle (or grand-uncle?) of hers. There are the British marching into town in front of the meeting-house and facing about in front of where the tavern now stands, scattered Britons going up Main Street and about the town, and two officers on the Burying Hill looking west with a spy-glass.

The meeting-house stands as I remember it, but with three stories of windows, door in front toward Common, and no porches or spire; horse-sheds and noon (?) house behind and one side. The Jarvis house; then Wright's Tavern very plain; a bevel-roofed house endwise to the road where the Middlesex House is, which Mrs. B. calls Dr. Minnott's house; then a little hut; then the old court-house about where the brick schoolhouse is (this the extreme right). Left of the bevel-roofed house is a small house where the stable and sheds are — some say Betty Hartshorne's; then a small building on the Mill-Dam; then the old mill; the Vose house, plain, three stories; another house just beyond and apparently in front of it; E. Hubbard's plain, and a small house back and towards the Vose house, and a dozen or fifteen provincials there; then some houses, probably Peter Wheeler's three or four storehouses, whence redcoats are rolling barrels into the pond — and maybe partly from E. Hubbard's; and perhaps that is the Timothy, and after Peter, Wheeler house seen a little further east, where N.

Stow's house is now. A large house apparently where the brick house is, and a row seen behind it up the street; Dr. Hurd's house, and four small buildings far behind it; and others seen up street behind Hurd house. But we see no further up *in* the street than where N. Brooks now lives. Beyond, the town appears well wooded. Lee's Hill also on this side. Great and Little Wachusett are seen in the horizon, and Nobscot.

Can we believe, when beholding this landscape, with only a few buds visibly swollen on the trees and the ground covered eight inches deep with snow, that the grain was waving in the fields and the apple-trees were in blossom April 19, 1775? It may confirm this story, however, what Grandmother said — that she carried ripe cherries from Weston to her brother in Concord Jail [1] the 17th of June the same year. It is probably true, what E. Wood, senior, says, that the grain was just beginning to wave, and the apple blossoms beginning to expand.

Abel Hunt tells me to-night that he remembers that the date of the old Hunt house used to be on the chimney, and it was 1703, or 1704, within a year or two; that Governor Winthrop sold the farm to a Hunt, and they have the deed now. There is one of the old-fashioned diamond squares set in lead still, in the back part of the house.

How I love the simple, reserved countrymen, my neighbors, who mind their own business and let me

[1] This Mr. Jones was a Tory who fled to Halifax and later, in trying to bring in supplies for the British soldiers in Boston during the siege, was captured and sent to Concord Jail.

alone, who never waylaid nor shot at me, to my knowledge, when I crossed their fields, though each one has a gun in his house! For nearly two-score years I have known, at a distance, these long-suffering men, whom I never spoke to, who never spoke to me, and now feel a certain tenderness for them, as if this long probation were but the prelude to an eternal friendship. What a long trial we have withstood, and how much more admirable we are to each other, perchance, than if we had been bedfellows! I am not only grateful because Veias, and Homer, and Christ, and Shakespeare have lived, but I am grateful for Minott, and Rice, and Melvin, and Goodwin, and Puffer even. I see Melvin all alone filling his sphere, in russet suit, which no other could fill or suggest. He takes up as much room in nature as the most famous.

On gala days the town fires its guns, which echo like popguns to these woods, and some waifs of martial music occasionally penetrate thus far. To me, away there in my bean-field at the other end of the town, the big guns sounded as if a puffball had burst; and when there was a military turnout of which I was ignorant, I have sometimes had a vague sense all the day of some sort of itching and disease in the horizon, as if some eruption would break out there soon, either scarletina or canker-rash, until at length some more favorable puff of the wind, making haste over the fields and up the Wayland road, brought me information of the 'trainers.' It seemed by the distant hum as if somebody's bees had swarmed, and that the neighbors, according to Virgil's advice, by a

faint *tintinnabulum* upon the most sonorous of their domestic utensils, were endeavoring to call them down into the hive again. And when the sound died quite away, and the hum had ceased, and the most favorable breezes told no tale, I knew that they had got the last drone of them all safely into the Middlesex hive, and that now their minds were bent on the honey with which it was smeared.

I felt proud to know that the liberties of Massachusetts and our fatherland were in such safe keeping; and as I turned to my hoeing again I was filled with an inexpressible confidence, and pursued my labor cheerfully with a calm trust in the future.

'I once set fire to the woods,' wrote Thoreau, in his confession of the most serious offence which he ever gave to his fellow townsmen. This occurred on Town-Meeting Day in April, 1844, when he was six and twenty, and in accordance with his neighbors' views should have been speech-making, or voting.

Instead, he and his younger companion Edward Hoar were spending the day on the Sudbury River which they meant to explore to its source, carrying fishing-tackle, that they might procure their food from the stream, Indian fashion. At the shoemaker's near the river they obtained a match, which they had forgotten.

Of the mischief wrought by this 'match' Thoreau says:

'The river was low, for there had not been much rain; and we succeeded in catching a mess of fish sufficient for our dinner before we had left the town; and by the shores of Fair Haven Pond we proceeded to cook them. The earth was uncommonly dry, and our fire, kindled far from the woods in a sunny recess

in the hillside on the east of the pond, suddenly caught the dry grass of the previous year which grew about the stump on which it was kindled.

We sprang to extinguish it, at first with our hands and feet, and then we fought it with a board obtained from the boat; but in a few minutes it was beyond our reach. Being on the side of the hill it spread rapidly upward, through the long, dry, wiry grass interspersed with bushes.

'When will this end?' asked my companion. I saw that it might be bounded by Well Meadow Brook on one side; but would perchance go to the village side of that brook. 'It will go to town,' I answered. While my companion took the boat back down the river, I set out through the woods, to inform the owners, and to raise the town.

The fire had already spread a dozen rods on every side, and went leaping and crackling wildly and irreclaimably toward the wood. That way went the flames with wild delight; and we felt we had no control over the demoniac creature to which we had given birth. We had kindled many fires in the woods before, burning a clear space in the grass — without ever kindling such a fire as this.

As I ran toward the town through the woods, I could see the smoke over the woods behind me marking the spot and progress of the flames. The first farmer whom I met (driving a team), after leaving the woods, inquired the cause of the smoke. I told him. 'Well,' said he, 'it is none of my stuff,' and drove along. The next I met was the owner of the

field, with whom I returned at once to the woods, running all the way. I had already run two miles. When at length we got into the neighborhood of the flames, we met a carpenter who had been hewing timber, an infirm man, who had been driven off by the fire, fleeing with his axe. The farmer returned to hasten more assistance. I, who was spent with running, remained. What could I do alone against a front of flame half a mile wide. . . .

I walked slowly through the wood (and up a tall hill) to Fair Haven Cliff, climbed to the highest rock, and sat down upon it to observe the progress of the flames, which were rapidly approaching me, now about a mile distant from the spot where the fire was kindled. Presently I heard the sound of the distant bell giving the alarm, and I knew that the town was on its way to the scene. Hitherto I had felt like a guilty person — nothing but shame and regret. But now I settled the matter with myself: 'Who are these men who are said to be the owners of these woods, and how am I related to them? I have set fire to the forest; but I have done no wrong therein; and now it is as if the lightning had done it. The flames are but consuming their natural food.'

(It has never troubled me from that day to this more than if the lightning had done it. The trivial fishing was all that disturbed me, and disturbs me still.) So shortly I settled it with myself, and stood to watch the approaching flames. It was a glorious spectacle, and I was the only one there to enjoy it. The fire now reached the base of the Cliff, and then

rushed up its sides. The squirrels ran before it in blind haste, and three pigeons dashed into the midst of the smoke. The flames flashed up the pines to their tops, as if they were powder. When I found I was about to be surrounded by the fire, I retreated, and joined the forces now arriving from the town.

It took us several hours to surround the flames with our hoes and shovels and by back fires subdue them. In the midst of all I saw the farmer, whom I first met, who had turned indifferently away, saying it was none of his stuff, striving earnestly to save his corded wood, his stuff, which the fire had already seized, and which it after all consumed.

It burned over one hundred acres or more, and destroyed much young wood. When I returned home late in the day, with others of my townsmen, I could not help noticing that the crowd, who were so ready to condemn the individual who had kindled the fire, did not sympathize with the owners of the wood, but were in fact highly elate, and, as it were, thankful for the opportunity which had afforded them so much sport. . . .

That night I watched the fire, where some stumps still flamed at midnight in the midst of the blackened waste; wandering through the woods by myself; and far into the night I threaded my way to the spot where the fire had taken, and discovered the now broiled fish — which had been dressed — scattered over the burnt grass.

When the lightning burns the forest, its Director makes no apology to man; and I was but His agent.

Perhaps we owe to this accident partly some of the noblest natural parks. It is inspiring to walk amid the fresh green sprouts of grass and shrubbery pushing upward through the charred surface with more vigorous growth.

This incident had no doubt something to do with Thoreau's retirement to Walden the following year 1845, and it was said to be the most important transaction between him and his fellow townsmen which took place in the course of his first thirty years. His biographer asserts that it left shades of regret and animosity in certain families for years, while Thoreau's own remorse for the occurrence was much greater than his words concerning it suggest. Since that date fires have been kindled many times by the locomotives scattering sparks through the Concord woods, and the towns-people including the Emersons, Thoreaus, and Channings have been called upon to help extinguish the flames.

CHAPTER XIII

FREEDOM AND EDUCATION

In '75 two or three hundred of the inhabitants of Concord assembled at one of the bridges with arms in their hands to assert the right of three millions to tax themselves, to have a voice in governing themselves. About a week ago the authorities of Boston, having the sympathy of many of the inhabitants of Concord, assembled in the gray of the dawn, assisted by a still larger armed force, to send back a perfectly innocent man, and one whom they knew to be innocent, into a slavery as complete as the world ever knew. Of course it makes not the least difference — I wish you to consider this — who the man was — whether he was Jesus Christ or another — for inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these his brethren ye did it unto him. Do you think *he* would have stayed here in liberty and let the black man go into slavery in his stead? They sent him back, I say, to live in slavery with other three millions — mark that — whom the same slave power, or slavish power, North and South, holds in that condition — three millions who do not, like the first mentioned, assert the right to govern themselves but simply to run away and stay away from their prison.

Just a week afterward, those inhabitants of this town who especially sympathize with the authorities of Boston in this their deed, caused the bells to be

rung and the cannon to be fired to celebrate the courage and the love of liberty of those men who assembled at the bridge. As if those three millions had fought for the right to be free themselves, but to hold in slavery three million others. Why, gentlemen, even consistency, though it is much abused, is sometimes a virtue. Every humane and intelligent inhabitant of Concord, when he or she heard those bells and those cannon, thought not so much of the events of the 19th of April, 1775, as of the event of the 12th of April, 1851.

I wish my townsmen to consider that, whatever the human law may be, neither an individual nor a nation can ever deliberately commit the least act of injustice without having to pay the penalty for it. A government which deliberately enacts injustice, and persists in it! — it will become the laughing-stock of the world.

Much as has been said about American slavery, I think that commonly we do not yet realize what slavery is. If I were seriously to propose to Congress to make mankind into sausages, I have no doubt that most would smile at my proposition and, if any believed me to be in earnest, they would think that I proposed something much worse than Congress had ever done. But, gentlemen, if any of you will tell me that to make a man into a sausage would be much worse — would be any worse — than to make him into a slave — than it was to enact the fugitive slave law — I shall here accuse him of foolishness, of intellectual incapacity, of making a distinction with-

out a difference. The one is just as sensible a proposition as the other.

When I read the account of the carrying back of the fugitive into slavery, which was read last Sunday evening, and read also what was not read here, that the man who made the prayer on the wharf was Daniel Foster of *Concord*, I could not help feeling a slight degree of pride because, of all the towns in the Commonwealth, Concord was the only one distinctly named as being represented in that new tea-party, and, as she had a place in the first, so would have a place in this, the last and perhaps next most important chapter of the History of Massachusetts. But my second feeling, when I reflected how short a time that gentleman has resided in this town, was one of doubt and shame, because the *men* of Concord in recent times have done nothing to entitle them to the honor of having their town named in such a connection.

We of Massachusetts boast a good deal of what we do for the education of our people, of our district-school system; and yet our district schools are as it were but infant-schools, and we have no system for the education of the great mass who are grown up. I have yet to learn that one cent is spent by this town, this political community called Concord, directly to educate the great mass of its inhabitants who have long since left the district school; for the Lyceum, important as it is comparatively, though absolutely trifling, is supported by individuals. There are certain refining and civilizing influences, as works of art, journals and books, and scientific instruments, which

this community is amply rich enough to purchase, which would educate this village, elevate its tone of thought, and, if it alone improved these opportunities, easily make it the centre of civilization in the known world, put us on a level as to opportunities at once with London and Arcadia, and secure us a culture at once superior to both.

Yet we spend sixteen thousand dollars on a Town House, a hall for our political meetings mainly, and nothing to educate ourselves who are grown up. Pray is there nothing in the market, no advantages, no intellectual food worth buying? Have Paris and London and New York and Boston nothing to dispose of which this village might try and appropriate to its own use? Might not this great villager adorn his villa with a few pictures and statues, enrich himself with a choice library as available, without being cumbrous, as any in the world, with scientific instruments for such as have a taste to use them? Yet we are contented to be countrified, to be provincial. I am astonished to find that in this Nineteenth Century, in this land of free schools, we spend absolutely nothing as a town on our own education, cultivation, civilization. Each town, like each individual, has its own character — some more, some less, cultivated. I know many towns so mean-spirited and benighted that it would be a disgrace to belong to them. I believe that some of our New England villages within thirty miles of Boston are as boorish and barbarous communities as there are on the face of the earth. And how much superior are the best of them? If London has any refinement, any

information to sell, why should we not buy it? Would not the town of Carlisle do well to spend sixteen thousand dollars on its own education at once, if it could only find a schoolmaster for itself? It has one man, as I hear, who takes the 'North American Review.' That will never civilize them, I fear. Why should not the town itself take the London and Edinburgh Reviews, and put itself in communication with whatever sources of light and intelligence there are in the world?

Yet Carlisle is very little behind Concord in these respects. I do not know but it spends its proportional part on education. How happens it that the only libraries which the towns possess are the district-school libraries — books for children only, or for readers who must needs be written down to? Why should they not have a library, if not so extensive, yet of the same stamp and more select than the British Museum? It is not that the town cannot well afford to buy these things, but it is unaspiring and ignorant of its own wants. It sells milk, but it only builds larger barns with the money which it gets for its milk. Undoubtedly every New England village is as able to surround itself with as many civilizing influences of this kind (as) the members of the English nobility; and here there need be no peasantry. If the London 'Times' is the best newspaper in the world, why does not the village of Concord take it, that its inhabitants may read it, and not the second best? If the South Sea explorers have at length got their story ready, and Congress has neglected to make it accessible to the

people, why does not Concord purchase one for its grown-up children?

When I consider my neighbors, the farmers of Concord, for instance, who are at least as well off as the other classes, what are they about? For the most part I find that they have been toiling ten, twenty, or thirty years to pay for their farms, and we may set down one half of that toil to the cost of their houses; and commonly they have not yet paid for them. This is the reason they are poor; and for similar reasons we are all poor in respect to a thousand savage comforts, though surrounded by luxuries.

But most men do not know what a house is, and the mass are actually poor all their days because they think they must have such an one as their neighbor's. As if one were to wear any sort of coat the tailor might cut out for him, or, gradually leaving off palm-leaf hat and cap of woodchuck-skin, should complain of hard times because he could not buy him a crown!

In writing to Mrs. Emerson from Staten Island in 1843, he declared:

You must not think that fate is so dark there, for even here I can see a faint reflected light over Concord, and I think that at this distance I can better weigh the value of a doubt there. Your moonlight, as I have told you, though it is a reflection of the sun, allows of bats and owls and other twilight birds to flit therein. . . .

I have hardly begun to live on Staten Island yet; but, like the man who, when forbidden to tread on

English ground, carried Scottish ground in his boots, I carry Concord ground in my boots and in my hat, and am I not made of Concord dust? I cannot realize that it is the roar of the sea I hear now, and not the wind in Walden woods. I find more of Concord, after all, in the prospect of the sea, beyond Sandy Hook, than in the fields and woods. . . . There is a beautiful red honeysuckle now in blossom in the woods here, which should be transplanted to Concord; and if what they tell me about the tulip-tree be true, you should have that also.

Again, he writes to Emerson:

My thoughts revert to those dear hills and that *river* which so fills up the world to its brim — worthy to be named with Mincius and Alpheus — still drinking its meadows while I am far away. How can it run heedless to the sea, as if I were there to countenance it? . . .

I am pleased to think of Channing as an inhabitant of the gray town. Seven cities contended for Homer dead. Tell him to remain at least long enough to establish Concord's right and interest in him. I was beginning to know the man. In imagination I see you pilgrims taking your way by the red lodge and the cabin of the brave farmer man, so youthful and hale, to the still cheerful woods. And Hawthorne, too, I remember as one with whom I sauntered, in old heroic times, along the banks of the Scamander, amid the ruins of chariots and heroes. Tell him not to desert, even after the tenth year. Others may say, 'Are there

not the cities of Asia?' But what are they? Staying at home is the heavenly way.

A few weeks later, in writing to his mother, he exclaims:

I should have liked to be in Walden woods with you, but not with the railroad. I think of you all very often, and wonder if you are still separated from me only by so many miles of earth, or so many miles of memory. This life we live is a strange dream, and I don't believe at all any account men give of it. Methinks I should be content to sit at the back door in Concord, under the poplar tree, henceforth forever. Not that I am homesick at all — for places are strangely indifferent to me — but Concord is still a cynosure to my eyes, and I find it hard to attach it, even in imagination, to the rest of the globe, and tell where the seam is.

He wrote in regard to his book for which there had been no demand:

For a year or two past, my *publisher*, falsely so called, has been writing from time to time to ask what disposition should be made of the copies of 'A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers,' still on hand, and at last suggesting that he had use for the room they occupied in his cellar. So I had them all sent to me here, and they have arrived to-day by express, filling the man's wagon — 706 copies out of an edition of 1000 which I bought of Munroe four years ago and have been ever since paying for, and have not quite paid for yet. The wares are sent to me at last, and I

have an opportunity to examine my purchase. They are something more substantial than fame, as my back knows, which has borne them up two flights of stairs to a place similar to that to which they trace their origin. Of the remaining two hundred and ninety-odd, seventy-five were given away, the rest sold. I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself. Is it not well that an author should behold the fruits of his labor? My works are piled up on one side of my chamber half as high as my head, my *opera omnia.* This is authorship; these are the work of my brain. There was just one piece of good luck in the venture. The unbound were tied up by the printer four years ago in stout paper-wrappers, and inscribed —

H. D. Thoreau's
Concord River
50 cops.

So Munroe had only to cross out 'River' and write 'Mass.' and deliver them to the expressman at once. I can see now what I write for, the result of my labors.

Nevertheless, in spite of this result, sitting beside the inert mass of my works, I take up my pen to-night to record what thought or experience I may have had, with as much satisfaction as ever. Indeed, I believe that this result is more inspiring and better for me than if a thousand had bought my wares. It affects my privacy less and leaves me freer.

I am not afraid that I shall exaggerate the value and significance of life, but that I shall not be up to the occasion which it is. I shall be sorry to remember

that I was there, but noticed nothing remarkable — not so much as a prince in disguise; lived in the golden age a hired man; visited Olympus even, but fell asleep after dinner, and did not hear the conversation of the gods. I lived in Judæa eighteen hundred years ago, but I never knew that there was such a one as Christ among my contemporaries!

How prompt we are to satisfy the hunger and thirst of our bodies; how slow to satisfy the hunger and thirst of our *souls!* Even the priests, the men of God, so called, for the most part confess that they work for the support of the body. But he alone is the truly enterprising and practical man who succeeds in *maintaining* his soul here. Have we not our everlasting life to get? and that is the only excuse at last for eating, drinking, sleeping, or even carrying an umbrella when it rains? If we made the true distinction we should almost all of us be seen to be in the almshouse for souls.

CHAPTER XIV

WALDEN POND

I WAS seated by the shore of a small pond, about a mile and a half south of the village of Concord and somewhat higher than it, in the midst of an extensive wood between that town and Lincoln, and about two miles south of that our only field known to fame, Concord battle-ground; but I was so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile off, like the rest, covered with wood, was my most distant horizon. For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond, it impressed me like a tarn high up on the one side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. The very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains.

This small lake was of most value as a neighbor in the intervals of a gentle rain-storm in August, when, both air and water being perfectly still, but the sky overcast, mid-afternoon had all the serenity of evening, and the wood-thrush sang around, and was heard from shore to shore. A lake like this is never

smoother than at such a time; and the clear portion of the air above it being shallow and darkened by clouds, the water, full of light and reflections, becomes a lower heaven itself so much the more important. From a hill-top near by, where the wood had been recently cut off, there was a pleasing vista southward across the pond, through a wide indentation in the hills which form the shore there, where their opposite sides sloping towards each other suggested a stream flowing out in that direction through a wooded valley, but stream there was none. That way I looked between and over the near green hills to some distant and higher ones in the horizon, tinged with blue. Indeed, by standing on tiptoe I could catch a glimpse of some of the peaks of the still bluer and more distant mountain ranges in the north west, those true blue coins of heaven's own mint, and also of some portion of the village. But in other directions, even from this point, I could not see over or beyond the woods that surrounded me.

The scenery of Walden is on a humble scale, and, though very beautiful, does not approach to grandeur, nor can it much concern one who has not long frequented it or lived by its shore; yet this pond is so remarkable for its depth and purity as to merit a particular description. It is a clear and deep green well, half a mile long and a mile and three quarters in circumference, and contains about sixty-one and a half acres; a perennial spring in the midst of pine and oak woods, without any visible inlet or outlet except by the clouds and evaporation. The surrounding hills

rise abruptly from the water to the height of forty to eighty feet, though on the southeast and east they attain to about one hundred and one hundred and fifty feet respectively, within a quarter and a third of a mile. They are exclusively woodland.

All our Concord waters have two colors at least, one when viewed at a distance, and another, more proper, close at hand. The first depends more on the light, and follows the sky. In clear weather, in summer, they appear blue at a little distance, especially if agitated, and at a great distance appear all alike. Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the color of both.

The water is so transparent that the bottom can easily be discerned at the depth of twenty-five or thirty feet. Paddling over it, you may see many feet beneath the surface the schools of perch and shiners, perhaps only an inch long, yet the former easily distinguished by their transverse bars, and you think that they must be ascetic fish that find a subsistence there.

Perhaps on that spring morning when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden, Walden Pond was already in existence, and even then breaking up in a gentle spring rain accompanied with mist and a southerly wind, and covered with myriads of ducks and geese, which had not heard of the fall, when still such pure lakes sufficed them. Even then it had commenced to rise and fall, and had clarified its waters and colored them of the hue they now wear, and ob-

tained a patent from heaven to be the only Walden Pond in the world and distiller of celestial dews. Who knows in how many unremembered nations' literatures this has been the Castilian Fountain? or what nymphs presided over it in the Golden Age? It is a gem of the first water, which Concord wears in her coronet.

A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye, looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluviatile trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around are its overhanging brows.

Standing on the smooth sandy beach at the east end of the pond, in a calm September afternoon, when a slight haze makes the opposite shore indistinct, I have seen whence came the expression 'the glassy surface of a lake.' When you invert your head, it looks like a thread of finest gossamer stretched across the valley, and gleaming against the distant pine woods, separating one stratum of the atmosphere from another. You would think that you could walk dry under it to the opposite hills, and that the swallows which skim over might perch on it. Indeed, they sometimes dive below the line, as it were by mistake, and are undeceived. As you look over the pond westward you are obliged to employ both your hands to defend your eyes against the reflected as well as the true sun, for they are equally bright; and if, between the two, you survey its surface critically, it is literally as smooth as glass, except where the skater insects, at equal in-

tervals scattered over its whole extent, by their motions in the sun produce the finest imaginable sparkle on it, or, perchance a duck plumes itself, or, as I have said, a swallow skims so low as to touch it.

In such a day, in September or October, Walden is a perfect forest mirror, set round with stones as precious to my eye as if fewer or rarer. Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake, perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water. It needs no fence. Nations come and go without defiling it. It is a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs; no storms, no dust, can dim its surface ever fresh; — a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush — this the light dust-cloth — which retains no breath that is breathed on it, but sends its own to float as clouds high above its surface, and be reflected on its bosom still.

White Pond and Walden are great crystals on the surface of the earth, Lakes of Light. If they were permanently congealed, and small enough to be clutched, they would, perchance, be carried off by slaves, like precious stones, to adorn the heads of emperors; but being liquid, and ample, and secured to us and our successors forever, we disregard them, and run after the diamond Koh-i-noor. They are too pure to have a market value; they contain no muck. How much more beautiful than our lives, how much more transparent than our characters, are they! We never learned meanness of them. How much fairer than the

pool before the farmer's door, in which his ducks swim! Hither the clean wild ducks come. Nature has no human inhabitant who appreciates her. The birds with their plumage and their notes are in harmony with the flowers, but what youth or maiden conspires with the wild luxuriant beauty of Nature?

When I was four years old, as I well remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. It is one of the oldest scenes stamped on my memory. And now to-night my flute has waked the echoes over that very water. The pines still stand here older than I; or, if some have fallen, I have cooked my supper with their stumps, and a new growth is rising all around, preparing another aspect for new infant eyes. Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture, and even I have at length helped to clothe that fabulous landscape of my infant dreams, and one of the results of my presence and influence is seen in these bean-leaves, corn-blades, and potato-vines.

While I bask in the sun on these shores of Walden Pond, by this heat and this rustle I am absolved from all obligation to the past. The council of nations may reconsider their votes. The grating of a pebble annuls them. Nothing can be more useful to man than a determination not to be hurried.

I cannot utter my thoughts unless I have infinite room. The cope of heaven is not too high, the sea not too deep, for him who would unfold a great thought. It must feed me, and warm and clothe me. It must be

an entertainment to which my whole nature is invited. I must know that the gods are to be my fellow guests.

As soon as those spring mornings arrive in which the birds sing, I am sure to be an early riser, I am waked by my genius, I wake to inaudible melodies, and am surprised to find myself awaiting the dawn in so serene and joyful and expectant a mood. I have an appointment with Spring. She comes to the window to wake me, and I go forth an hour or two earlier than usual. It is by especial favor that I am waked, not rudely, but gently, as infants should be waked.

When I witness the first ploughing and planting I acquire a long lost confidence in the earth, that it will nourish the seed that is committed to its bosom. I am surprised to be reminded that there is warmth in it. We have not only warmer skies then, but a warmer earth. The frost is out of it and we may safely commit these seeds to it in some places.

Yesterday I walked with a farmer beside his team and saw one furrow turned quite round his field. What noble work is ploughing, with the broad and solid earth for material, the ox for fellow laborer, the simple but efficient plough for tool. Work that is not done in any shop, in a cramped position, work that tells, that concerns all men, which the sun shines and the rain falls on, and the birds sing over. You turn over the whole vegetable mould, expose how many grubs, and put a new aspect on the face of the earth. It comes pretty near to making a world.

This afternoon I throw off my outside coat, a mild

spring day. I must hie me to the meadows. The air is full of bluebirds. The ground is almost entirely bare. The villagers are out in the sun, and every man is happy whose work takes him out-of-doors. I go by Sleepy Hollow towards the great fields. I lean over a rail to hear what is in the air, liquid with the bluebird's warble. My life partakes of infinity. The air is deep as our natures. Is the drawing in of this vital air attended with no more glorious results than I witness? The air is a velvet cushion against which I press my ear. I go forth to make new demands on life. I wish to begin this summer well. To do something in it worthy and wise. To transcend my daily routine and that of my townsmen, to have my immortality now, that it be in the quality of my daily life, to pay the greatest price, the greatest tax of any man in Concord, and enjoy the most! I will give all I am for my nobility. I will pay all my days for my success. I pray that the life of this spring and summer may be fair in my memory. May I dare as I have never done. May I purify myself anew as with fire and water, soul and body. May my melody not be wanting to the season. May I gird myself to be a hunter of the beautiful, that nought escape me. May I attain to a youth never attained. I am eager to report the glory of the universe: may I be worthy to do it; to have got through regarding human values, so as not to be distracted from regarding divine values. It is reasonable that a man should be something worthier at the end of the year than he was at the beginning.

CHAPTER XV

RIVER AND FIELD

If you know the taste of your own heart, and like it, come to Concord, and I'll warrant you enough here to season the dish with — aye, even though Channing and Emerson and I were all away. We might paddle quietly up the river.

There are many more such voyages, and longer ones to be made on that river, for it is the water of life. The Ganges is nothing to it. Observe its reflections — no idea but is familiar to it. That river, though to dull eyes it seems terrestrial wholly, flows through Elysium. What powers bathe in it invisible to villagers! Talk of its shallowness — that hay-carts can be driven through it at midsummer; its depth passeth my understanding. If, forgetting the allurements of the world, I could drink deeply enough of it; if, cast adrift from the shore, I could with complete integrity float on it, I should never be seen on the mill-dam again. If there is any depth in me, there is a corresponding depth in it. It is the cold blood of the gods. I paddle and bathe in their artery.

That river — who shall say exactly whence it came, and whither it goes? Does aught that flows come from a higher source? Many things drift downward on its surface which would enrich a man. If you could only be on the alert all day, and every day! And the nights are as long as the days.

CONCORD RIVER

How much of beauty — of color, as well as form — on which our eyes daily rest goes unperceived by us! No one but a botanist is likely to distinguish nicely the different shades of green with which the open surface of the earth is clothed — not even a landscape-painter if he does not know the species of sedges and grasses which paint it. With respect to the color of grass, most of those even who attend peculiarly to the aspects of Nature only observe that it is more or less dark or light, green or brown, or velvety, fresh or parched, etc. But if you are studying grasses you look for another and different beauty, and you find it, in the wonderful variety of color, etc., presented by the various species. Take the bare, unwooded earth now, and consider the beautiful variety of shades (or tints?) of green that clothe it under a bright sun. The pastured hills of Conantum, now just imbrowned (probably by the few now stale flowering tops of the red-top which the cows have avoided as too wiry), present a hard and solid green or greenish brown, just touched here and there delicately with light patches of sheep's fescue (though it may be only its radical leaves left), as if a dew lay on it there, — and this has some of the effect of a watered surface, — and the whole is dotted with a thousand little shades of projecting rocks and shrubs. Then, looking lower at the meadow in Miles's field, that is seen as a bright-yellow and sunny stream (yet with a slight tinge of glaucous) between the dark-green potato-fields, flowing onward with windings and expansions, and, as it were, with rips and waterfalls, to the river meadows.

Again, I sit on the brow of the orchard, and look northwest down the river valley (at mid-afternoon). There flows, or rests, the calm blue winding river, lake-like, with its smooth silver-plated sides, and wherever weeds extend across it, there too the silver plate bridges it, like a spirit's bridge across the Styx; but the rippled portions are blue as the sky. This river reposes in the midst of a broad brilliant yellow valley amid green fields and hills and woods, as if, like the Nanking or Yang-ho (or what-not), it flowed through an Oriental Chinese meadow where yellow is the imperial color. The immediate and raised edge of the river, with its willows and button-bushes and polygonums, is a light green, but the immediately adjacent low meadow, where the sedge prevails, is a brilliant and cheerful yellow, intensely, incredibly bright, such color as you never see in pictures; yellow of various tints, in the lowest and sedgiest parts deepening to so much color as if gamboge had been rubbed into the meadow there; the most cheering color in all the landscape; shaded with little darker isles of green in the midst of this yellow sea of sedge. Yet it is the bright and cheerful yellow, as of spring, and with nothing in the least autumnal in it. How this contrasts with the adjacent fields of red-top, now fast falling before the scythe!

When your attention has been drawn to them, nothing is more charming than the common colors of the earth's surface.

Most of us are still related to our native fields as the navigator to undiscovered islands in the sea. We can

any autumn discover a new fruit there which will surprise us by its beauty or sweetness. So long as I saw one or two kinds of berries in my walks whose names I did not know, the proportion of the unknown seemed indefinitely if not infinitely great.

Famous fruits imported from the tropics and sold in our markets — as oranges, lemons, pineapples, and bananas — do not concern me so much as many an unnoticed wild berry whose beauty annually lends a new charm to some wild walk, or which I have found to be palatable to an outdoor taste.

The tropical fruits are for those who dwell within the tropics; their fairest and sweetest parts cannot be exported nor imported. Brought here, they chiefly concern those whose walks are through the market-place. It is not the orange of Cuba, but the checkerberry of the neighboring pasture, that most delights the eye and the palate of the New England child. What if the Concord Social Club, instead of eating oranges from Havana, should spend an hour in admiring the beauty of some wild berry from their own fields which they never attended to before? It is not the foreignness or size or nutritive qualities of a fruit that determine its absolute value.

It is not those far-fetched fruits which the speculator imports that concerns us chiefly, but rather those which you have fetched yourself in your basket from some far hill or swamp, journeying all the long afternoon in the hold of a basket, consigned to your friends at home, the first of the season.

We cultivate imported shrubs in our front yards for

the beauty of their berries, when yet more beautiful berries grow unregarded by us in the surrounding fields.

As some beautiful or palatable fruit is perhaps the noblest gift of nature to man, so is a fruit with which a man has in some measure identified himself by cultivating or collecting it one of the most suitable presents to a friend. It was some compensation for Commodore Porter, who may have introduced some cannonballs and bombshells into ports where they were not wanted, to have introduced the Valparaiso squash into the United States. I think this eclipses his military glory.

As I sail the unexplored sea of Concord, many a dell and swamp and wooded hill is my Ceram and Amboyna.

A man fits out a ship at a great expense and sends it to the West Indies with a crew of men and boys, and after six months or a year it comes back with a load of pineapples. Now, if not more gets accomplished than the speculator commonly aims at — if it simply turns out what is called a successful venture — I am less interested in this expedition than in some child's first excursion a-huckleberrying, in which it is introduced into a new world, experiences a new development, though it brings home only a gill of huckleberries in its basket. I know that the newspapers and the politicians declare otherwise, but they do not alter the fact. Then, I think that the fruit of the latter expedition was finer than that of the former. It was a more fruitful expedition. The value of any experience is

measured, of course, not by the amount of money, but the amount of development we get out of it. If a New England boy's dealings with oranges and pineapples have had more to do with his development than picking huckleberries or pulling turnips have, then he rightly and naturally thinks more of the former; otherwise not.

Do not think that the fruits of New England are mean and insignificant, while those of some foreign land are noble and memorable. Our own, whatever they may be, are far more important to us than any others can be. They educate us, and fit us to live in New England. Better for us is the wild strawberry than the pineapple, the wild apple than the orange, the hazelnut or pignut than the cocoanut or almond, and not on account of their flavor merely, but the part they play in our education.

All our hills are or have been huckleberry hills, the three hills of Boston and, no doubt, Bunker Hill among the rest.

In May and June all our hills and fields are adorned with a profusion of the pretty little more or less bell-shaped flowers of this family, commonly turned toward the earth and more or less tinged with red or pink and resounding with the hum of insects, each one the forerunner of a berry the most natural, wholesome, palatable that the soil can produce.

For a mile or more on such a rocky mountain-top this will be the prevailing shrub, occupying every little shelf from several rods down to a few inches only in width, and then the berries droop in short wreaths

over the rocks, sometimes the thickest and largest along a seam in a shelving rock — either that light mealy-blue, or a shining black, or an intermediate blue, without bloom. When, at that season, I look from Concord toward the blue mountain-tops in the horizon, I am reminded that near at hand they are equally blue with berries.

The mountain-tops of New England, often lifted above the clouds, are thus covered with this beautiful blue fruit, in greater profusion than in any garden.

When it was proposed to me to go abroad, rub off some rust, and better my condition in a worldly sense, I fear lest my life will lose some of its homeliness. If these fields and streams and woods, the phenomena of nature here, and the simple occupations of the inhabitants should cease to interest and inspire me, no culture or wealth would atone for the loss. I fear the dissipation that travelling, going into society even the best, the enjoyment of intellectual luxuries, imply. If Paris is much in your mind, it is more and more to you, Concord is less and less, and yet it would be a wretched bargain to accept the proudest Paris in exchange for my native village. At best, Paris could only be a school in which to learn to live here. A stepping-stone to Concord, a school in which to fit for this university. I wish so to live ever as to derive my satisfactions and inspirations from the commonest events, every-day phenomena, so that what my senses hourly perceive, my daily walk, the conversation of my neighbors, may inspire me, and I may dream of no heaven but that which lies about me.

A man may acquire a taste for wine or brandy, and so lose his love for water, but should we not pity him?

The sight of a marsh hawk in Concord meadows is worth more to me than the entry of the allies into Paris. In this sense I am not ambitious. I do not wish my native soil to become exhausted and run out through neglect. Only that travelling is good which reveals to me the value of home and enables me to enjoy it better. That man is the richest whose pleasures are the cheapest.

MOUNTAINS

With frontier strength ye stand your ground,
With grand content ye circle round,
Tumultuous silence for all sound,
Ye distant nursery of rills,
Monadnock and the Peterborough hills;

. . . . . .

But special I remember thee
Wachusett! who like me
Standest alone without society.
Thy far blue eye,
A remnant of the sky,
Seen through the clearing or the gorge,
Or from the windows of the forge,
Doth leaven all it passes by.
Nothing is true.
But stands 'tween me and you,
Thou western pioneer,
Who know'st not shame nor fear,
By venturous spirit driven
Under the eaves of heaven;
And can'st expand thee there,
And breathe enough of air?

. . . . . .

Upholding heaven, holding down earth,
Thy pastime from thy birth;
Not steadied by the one, nor leaning on the other,
May I approve myself thy worthy brother!

CHAPTER XVI

WALKS

I CAN easily walk ten, fifteen, twenty, any number of miles, commencing at my own door, without going by any house, without crossing a road except where the fox and the mink do. Concord is the oldest inland town in New England, perhaps in the States, and the walker is peculiarly favored here. There are square miles in my vicinity which have no inhabitant. First along by the river, and then the brook, and then the meadow and the woodside. Such solitude! From a hundred hills I can see civilization and abodes of man afar. These farmers and their works are scarcely more obvious than woodchucks.

There are said to be two thousand inhabitants in Concord, and yet I find such ample space and verge, even miles of walking every day in which I do not meet nor see a human being, and often not very recent traces of them. So much of man as there is in your mind, there will be in your eye. Methinks that for a great part of the time, as much as it is possible, I walk as one possessing the advantages of human culture, fresh from society of men, but turned loose into the woods, the only man in nature, walking and meditating to a great extent as if man and his customs and institutions were not. The catbird, or the jay, is sure of the whole of your ear now. Each noise is like a stain on pure glass. The rivers now, these great blue

subterranean heavens, reflecting the supernal skies and red-tinted clouds.

Standing on distant hills, you see the heavens reflected, the evening sky, in some low lake or river in the valley, as perfectly as in any mirror they could be. Does it not prove how intimate heaven is with earth?

We commonly sacrifice to supper this serene and sacred hour. Our customs turn the hour of sunset to a trivial time, as at the meeting of two roads, one coming from the noon, the other leading to the night. It might be well if our repasts were taken out-of-doors, in view of the sunset and the rising stars.

The walker in the familiar fields which stretch around my native town sometimes finds himself in another land than is described in their owners' deeds, as it were in some far-away field on the confines of the actual Concord, where her jurisdiction ceases, and the idea which the word Concord suggests ceases to be suggested. These farms which I have myself surveyed, these bounds which I have set up, appear dimly still as through a mist; but they have no chemistry to fix them; they fade from the surface of the glass; and the picture which the painter painted stands out dimly from beneath. The world with which we are commonly acquainted leaves no trace, and it will have no anniversary.

I took a walk on Spaulding's Farm the other afternoon. I saw the setting sun lighting up the opposite side of a stately pine wood. Its golden rays straggled into the aisles of the wood as into some noble hall. I was impressed as if some ancient and altogether ad-

mirable and shining family had settled there in that part of the land called Concord, unknown to me — to whom the sun was servant — who had not gone into society in the village — who had not been called on. I saw their park, their pleasure-ground, beyond through the wood, in Spaulding's cranberry-meadow. The pines furnished them with gables as they grew. Their house was not obvious to vision; the trees grew through it. I do not know whether I heard the sounds of a suppressed hilarity or not. They seemed to recline on the sunbeams. They have sons and daughters. They are quite well. The farmer's cart-path, which leads directly through their hall, does not in the least put them out — as the muddy bottom of a pool is sometimes seen through the reflected skies. They never heard of Spaulding, and do not know that he is their neighbor — notwithstanding I heard him whistle as he drove his team through the house. Nothing can equal the serenity of their lives. Their coat of arms is simply a lichen. I saw it painted on the pines and oaks. Their attics were in the tops of the trees. They are of no politics. There was no noise of labor. I did not perceive that they were weaving or spinning. Yet I did detect, when the wind lulled and hearing was done away, the finest imaginable sweet musical hum — as of a distant hive in May, which perchance was the sound of their thinking. They had no idle thoughts, and no one without could see their work, for their industry was not as in knots and excrescences embayed.

But I find it difficult to remember them. They fade

irrevocably out of my mind even now while I speak and endeavor to recall them, and recollect myself. It is only after a long and serious effort to recollect my best thoughts that I become again aware of their cohabitancy. If it were not for such families as this, I think I should move out of Concord.

Be native to the universe. I, too, love Concord best, but I am glad when I discover, in oceans and wildernesses far away, the materials out of which a million Concords can be made — indeed, unless I discover them, I am lost myself — that there too I am at home. Nature is as far from me as God, and sometimes I have thought to go West after her. Though the city is no more attractive to me than ever, yet I see less difference between a city and some dismallest swamp than formerly. I would as lief find a few owls and frogs and mosquitoes less. I prefer even a more cultivated place, free from miasma and crocodiles, and I will take my choice.

From time to time I overlook the promised land, but I do not feel that I am travelling toward it. The moment I begin to look there, men and institutions get out of the way that I may see. I see nothing permanent in the society around me, and am not quite committed to any of its ways.

Many men walk by day; few walk by night. It is a very different season. Take a July night, for instance. About ten o'clock — when man is asleep, and day fairly forgotten — the beauty of moonlight is seen over lonely pastures where cattle are silently feeding. On all sides novelties present themselves. Instead of

the sun there are the moon and stars, instead of the wood-thrush there is the whip-poor-will, instead of butterflies in the meadows, fire-flies, winged sparks of fire! who would have believed it? What kind of cool, deliberate life dwells in those dewy abodes associated with a spark of fire? So man has fire in his eyes, or blood, or brain. Instead of singing birds, the half-throttled note of a cuckoo flying over, the croaking of frogs, and the intenser dream of crickets. But above all, the wonderful trump of the bull-frog, ringing from Maine to Georgia. The potato-vines stand upright, the corn grows apace, the bushes loom, the grain-fields are boundless. On our open river terraces once cultivated, by the Indian, they appear to occupy the ground like an army — their heads nodding in the breeze. Small trees and shrubs are seen in the midst, overwhelmed as by an inundation.

The shadows of rocks and trees, and shrubs and hills, are more conspicuous than the objects themselves. The slightest irregularities in the ground are revealed by the shadows, and what the feet find comparatively smooth, appears rough and diversified in consequence. For the same reason the whole landscape is more variegated and picturesque than by day. The smallest recesses in the rocks are dim and cavernous; the ferns in the wood appear of tropical size. The sweet fern and indigo in overgrown wood-paths wet you with dew up to your middle. The leaves of the shrub-oak are shining as if a liquid were flowing over them. The pools seen through the trees are as full of light as the sky. 'The light of the day

takes refuge in their bosoms,' as the Purana says of the ocean. All white objects are more remarkable than by day. A distant cliff looks like a phosphorescent space on a hillside. The woods are heavy and dark. Nature slumbers. You see the moonlight reflected from particular stumps in the recesses of the forest, as if she selected what to shine on. These small fractions of her light remind one of the plant called moon-seed — as if the moon were sowing it in such places.

Great restorer of antiquity, great enchanter! In a mild night, when the harvest or hunter's moon shines unobstructedly, the houses in our village, whatever architect they may have had by day, acknowledge only a master. The village street is then as wild as the forest. New and old things are confounded. I know not whether I am sitting on the ruins of a wall, or on the material which is to compose a new one. Nature is an instructed and impartial teacher, spreading no crude opinions, and flattering none; she will be neither radical nor conservative. Consider the moonlight, so civil, yet so savage!

The light is more proportionate to our knowledge than that of day. It is no more dusky in ordinary nights than our mind's habitual atmosphere, and the moonlight is as bright as our most illuminated moments are.

CHAPTER XVII

WINTER

We sleep, and at length awake to the still reality of a winter morning. The snow lies warm as cotton or down upon the window-sill; the broadened sash and frosted panes admit a dim and private light, which enhances the snug cheer within. The stillness of the morning is impressive. The floor creaks under our feet as we move toward the window to look abroad through some clear space over the fields. We see the roofs stand under their snow burden. From the eaves and fences hang stalactites of snow, and in the yard stand stalagmites covering some concealed core. The trees and shrubs rear white arms to the sky on every side; and where were walls and fences, we see fantastic forms stretching in frolic gambols across the dusky landscape, as if nature had strewn her fresh designs over the fields by night as models for man's art.

Silently we unlatch the door, letting the drift fall in, and step abroad to face the cutting air. . . . Opening the gate, we tread briskly along the lone country road, crunching the dry and crisped snow under our feet, or aroused by the sharp, clear creak of the wood-sled, just starting for the distant market, from the early farmer's door, where it has lain the summer long, dreaming amid the chips and stubble; while far through the drifts and powdered windows we see the farmer's early candle, like a paled star, emitting a

lonely beam, as if some severe virtue were at its matins there. And one by one the smokes begin to ascend from the chimneys amidst the trees and snows.

At length, having reached the edge of the woods, and shut out the gadding town, we enter within their covert as we go under the roof of a cottage, and cross its threshold, all ceiled and banked up with snow. They are glad and warm still, and as genial and cheery in winter as in summer. As we stand in the midst of the pines, in the flickering and checkered light which straggles but little way into their maze, we wonder if the towns have ever heard their simple story. It seems to us that no traveller has ever explored them, and notwithstanding the wonders which science is elsewhere revealing every day, who would not like to hear their annals? Our humble villages in the plain are their contribution. We borrow from the forests the boards which shelter, and the sticks which warm us. How important is their evergreen to the winter, that portion of the summer which does not fade, the permanent year, the unwithered grass. Thus simply, and with little expense of altitude, is the surface of the earth diversified. What would human life be without forests, those natural cities? From the tops of mountains they appear like smooth shaven lawns, yet whither shall we walk but in this taller grass?

In this glade covered with bushes of a year's growth, see how the silvery dust lies on every seared leaf and twig, deposited in such infinite and luxurious forms

as by their very variety atone for the absence of color. Observe the tiny tracks of mice around every stem, and the triangular tracks of the rabbit. A pure elastic heaven hangs over all, as if the impurities of the summer sky, refined and shrunk by the chaste winter's cold, had been winnowed from the heavens upon the earth.

Down yonder little glen the shrubs are drooping under their burden, and the red alder-berries contrast with the white ground. Here are the marks of a myriad feet which have already been abroad. The sun rises as proudly over such a glen as over the valley of the Seine or the Tiber, and it seems the residence of a pure and self-subsistent valor, such as they never witnessed; which never knew defeat nor fear. Here reign the simplicity and purity of a primitive age, and a health and hope far remote from towns and cities. Standing quite alone, far in the forest, while the wind is shaking down snow from the trees, and leaving the only human tracks behind us, we find our reflections of a richer variety than the life of cities. The chicadee and nut-hatch are more inspiring society than statesmen and philosophers and we shall return to these last, as to more vulgar companions. In this lonely glen, with its brook draining the slopes, its creased ice and crystals of all hues, where the spruces and hemlocks stand up on either side, and the rush and sere wild oats in the rivulet itself, our lives are more serene and worthy to contemplate.

As the day advances, the heat of the sun is reflected by the hillsides, and we hear a faint but sweet music,

where flows the rill released from its fetters, and the icicles are melting on the trees; and the nut-hatch and partridge are heard and seen. The south wind melts the snow at noon, and the bare ground appears with its withered grass and leaves, and we are invigorated by the perfume which exhales from it, as by the scent of strong meats.

Now our path begins to ascend gradually to the top of this high hill, from whose precipitous south side we can look over the broad country, of forest and field and river, to the distant snowy mountains. See yonder thin column of smoke curling up through the woods from some invisible farmhouse; the standard raised over some rural homestead. There must be a warmer and more genial spot there below, as where we detect the vapor from a spring forming a cloud above the trees. What fine relations are established between the traveller who discovers this airy column from some eminence in the forest and him who sits below! Up goes the smoke as silently and naturally as the vapor exhales from the leaves, and as busy disposing itself in wreaths as the housewife on the hearth below. It is a hieroglyphic of man's life, and suggests more intimate and important things than the boiling of a pot. Where its fine column rises above the forest, like an ensign, some human life has planted itself; and such is the beginning of Rome, the establishment of the arts, and the foundation of empires, whether on the prairies of America, or the steppes of Asia.

Before night we will take a journey on skates along

the course of this meandering river, as full of novelty to one who sits by the cottage fire all the winter's day, as if it were over the polar ice, with Captain Parry, or Franklin; following the winding of the stream, now flowing amid hills, now spreading out into fair meadows, and forming a myriad coves and bays where the pine and hemlock overarch. The river flows in the rear of the towns and we see all things from a new and wilder side. The fields and gardens come down to it with a frankness and freedom from pretension which they do not wear on the highway. It is the outside and edge of the earth. Our eyes are not offended by violent contrasts. The last rail of the farmer's fence is some swaying willow bough, which still preserves its freshness, and here at length all fences stop, and we no longer cross any road. We may go far up within the country now by the most retired and level road, never climbing a hill, but by broad levels ascending to the upland meadows. It is a beautiful illustration of the law of obedience, the flow of a river; the path for a sick man, a highway down which an acorn cup may float secure with its freight. Its slight occasional falls, whose precipices would not diversify the landscape, are celebrated by mist and spray, and attract the traveller from far and near. From the remote interior its current conducts him by broad and easy steps, or by one gentle inclined plane, to the sea. Thus by an early and constant yielding to the inequalities of the ground it secures itself the easiest passage.

No domain of nature is quite closed to man at all

times, and now we draw near to the empire of the fishes. Our feet glide swiftly over unfathomed depths, where in summer our line tempted the pout and perch, and where the stately pickerel lurked in the long corridors formed by the bulrushes. The deep, impenetrable marsh, where the heron waded, and bitterns squatted, is made pervious to our swift shoes, as if a thousand railroads had been made into it.

But now, while we have loitered, the clouds have gathered again, and a few straggling snow-flakes are beginning to descend. Faster and faster they fall, shutting out the distant objects from sight. The snow falls on every wood and field, and no crevice is forgotten; by the river and the pond, on the hill and in the valley. Quadrupeds are confined to their coverts, and the birds sit upon their perches this peaceful hour. There is not so much sound as in fair weather, but silently and gradually every slope, and the gray walls and fences, and the polished ice, and the sere leaves, which were not buried before, are concealed, and the tracks of men and beasts are lost. With so little effort does nature reassert her rule and blot out the traces of men.

CHAPTER XVIII

SUNSET

As the afternoons grow shorter, and the early evening drives us home to complete our chores, we are reminded of the shortness of life, and become more pensive, at least in this twilight of the year. We are prompted to make haste and finish our work before the night comes. I leaned over a rail in the twilight on the Walden road, waiting for the evening mail to be distributed, when such thoughts visited me. I seemed to recognize the November evening as a familiar thing come round again.

And yet there is no more tempting novelty than this new November. No going to Europe or another world is to be named with it. Give me the old familiar walk, post-office and all, with this ever new self, with this infinite expectation and faith, which does not know when it is beaten. We'll go nutting once more. We'll pluck the nut of the world, and crack it in the winter evenings. Theatres and all other sightseeing are puppet-shows in comparison. I will take another walk to the Cliff, another row on the river, another skate on the meadow, be out in the first snow, and associate with the winter birds. Here I am at home. In the bare and bleached crust of the earth I recognize my friend.

One actual Frederick that you know is worth a million only read of. Pray, am I altogether a bache-

lor, or am I a widower, that I should go away and leave my bride? This Morrow is ever knocking with irresistible force at our door, there is no such guest as that. I will stay at home and receive company.

I want nothing new, if I can have but a tithe of the old secured to me. I will spurn all wealth beside. Think of the consummate folly of attempting to go away from *here!* When the constant endeavor should be to get nearer and nearer *here.* Here are all the friends I ever had or shall have, and as friendly as ever. Why, I never had any quarrel with a friend but it was just as sweet as unanimity could be. I do not think we budge an inch forward or backward in relation to our friends. How many things can you go away from? They see the comet from the northwest coast just as plainly as we do, and the same stars through its tail. Take the shortest way round and stay at home. A man dwells in his native valley like a corolla in its calyx, like an acorn in its cup. *Here,* of course, is all that you love, all that you expect, all that you are. Here is your bride elect, as close to you as she can be got. Here is all the best and all the worst you can imagine. What more do you want? Bear here away then! Foolish people imagine that what they imagine is somewhere else. That stuff is not made in any factory but their own.

In many moods it is cheering to look across hence to that blue rim of the earth, and be reminded of the invisible towns and communities, for the most part also unremembered, which lie in the further and deeper hollows between me and those hills. Towns of sturdy

uplandish fame, where some of the morning and primal vigor still lingers, I trust. . . . It is cheering to think that it is with such communities that we survive or perish. Yes, the mountains do thus impart, in the mere prospect of them, some of the New Hampshire vigor. The melancholy man who had come forth to commit suicide on this hill might be saved by being thus reminded how many brave and contented lives are lived between him and the horizon. Those hills extend our plot of earth; they make our native valley or indentation in the earth so much the larger.

I love Nature partly *because* she is not man, but a retreat from him. None of his institutions control or pervade her. There a different kind of right prevails. In her midst I can be glad with an entire gladness. If this world were all man, I could not stretch myself, I should lose all hope. He is constraint, she is freedom to me. He makes me wish for another world. She makes me content with this. None of the joys she supplies is subject to his rules and definitions. What he touches he taints. In thought he moralizes. One would think that no free, joyful labor was possible to him. How infinite and pure the least pleasure of which Nature is basis, compared with the congratulation of mankind!

How pleasant to walk over beds of these fresh, crisp, and rustling fallen leaves — young hyson, green tea, clean, crisp, and wholesome! How beautiful they go to their graves! how gently lay themselves down and turn to mould! Painted of a thousand hues and fit to make the beds of the living. So they troop

to their graves, light and frisky. They put on no weeds. Merrily they go scampering over the earth, selecting their graves, whispering all through the woods about it. They that waved so loftily, how contentedly they return to dust again and are laid low, resigned to lie and decay at the foot of the tree and afford nourishment to new generations of their kind, as well as to flutter on high! How they are mixed up, all species, — oak and maple and chestnut and birch! They are about to add a leaf's breadth to the depth of the soil. We are all the richer for their decay. Nature is not cluttered with them. She is a perfect husbandman; she stores them all.

In August, '55, I levelled for the artificial pond at Sleepy Hollow. They dug gradually for three or four years and completed the pond last year, '59. It is now about a dozen rods long by five or six wide and two or three deep, and is supplied by copious springs in the meadow. There is a long ditch leading into it, in which no water now flows, nor has since winter at least, and a short ditch leading out of it into the brook. Well, in this pond thus dug in the midst of a meadow a year or two ago and supplied by springs in the meadow, I find to-day several small patches of the large yellow and the kalmiana lily already established. Thus in the midst of death we are in life. The water is apparently clear of weeds. The river, where these abound, is about half a mile distant down the little brook near which this pond lies. There may be a few pads in the ditched part of it at half that distance. How, then, did the seed get here? I learned last

winter that many small pouts and some sizable pickerel had been caught here, though the connection with the brook is a very slight and shallow ditch. I think, therefore, that the lily seeds have been conveyed into this pond from the river immediately, or perchance from the meadow between, either by fishes or reptiles, or birds which fed on them, and that the seeds were not lying dormant in the mud. You have only to dig a pond anywhere in the fields hereabouts, and you will soon have not only water fowl, reptiles, and fishes in it, but also the usual water plants, as lilies, etc. You will no sooner have got your pond dug than nature will begin to stock it.

As the rays of the sun fell horizontally across the placid pond, they lit up the side of Baker's Pleasant Meadow Wood, which covers a hill. The different shades of green of different and the same trees — alders, pines, birch, maple, oak, etc. — melting into one another on their rounded bosky edges, made a most glorious soft and harmonious picture, only to be seen at this season of the day and perhaps of the year. It was a beautiful green with lighter shadings and rounded figures like the outlines of trees and shrubs of different shades of green. In the case of a single tree there was the dark glossy green of the lower, older leaves — the spring growth — which hang down, fading on every side into the silvery hoariness of the younger and more downy leaves on the edges — the fall growth, whose under sides are seen, which stand up, and more perhaps at this hour. This was also the case with every bush along the river — the larger

glossy dark-green watery leaves beneath and in the recesses, the upright hoary leaves whose under side were seen on the shoots which rose above. I never saw a forest-side look more luxuriantly and at the same time freshly beautiful. These lighter shades in the rug had the effect of watered silks — the edges lit, the breasts dark green, almost the cast on green crops seen by moonlight.

As toward the evening of the day the lakes and streams are smooth, so in the fall, the evening of the year, the waters are smoothed more perfectly than at any other season. The day is an epitome of the year.

How fortunate and glorious that our world is not roofed in, but open like a Roman house — our skylight so broad and open! We do not climb the hills in vain. It is no crystal palace we dwell in. The windows of the sky are always open, and the storms blow in at them. The field sparrow sings with that varied strain. The night wind rises. On the eastern side of this hill it is already twilight. The air is cooler and clearer. The mountains which were almost invisible grow more distinct. The various heights of our hills are plainly shown by the more or less of the mountain bases seen from them. The atmosphere of the western horizon is impurpled, tingeing the mountains. A golden sheen is reflected from the river so brightly that it dazzles me as much as the sun. The now silver-plated river is burnished gold there, and in the midst of all I see a boat ascending with regular dip of its seemingly gilt oars. That which appears a strip of smooth, light silvery water on each side of the

stream, not reflecting the sky, is the reflection of light from the pads.

The sun is passing under the portcullis of the west. He is now almost ready to dip — like a round red disk shorn of his beams — his head shaved like a captive led forth to execution.

Meanwhile the night is rapidly gathering her forces in deepening lines of shade under the east side of the willowy causeway and the woods. Now the sun has dipped into the western ocean. He is one half below the horizon, and I see lines of distinct forest trees, miles and miles away on some ridge, now revealed against his disk. Now only the smallest segment of its sphere, like a coal of fire rising above the forest, is seen sending a rosy glow up the horizon sky. The illustrious traveller with whom we have passed a memorable day has gone his way, and we return slowly to our castle of the night.

We had a remarkable sunset one day last November. I was walking in a meadow, the source of a small brook, when the sun at last, just before setting, after a cold gray day, reached a clear stratum in the horizon, and the softest, brightest morning sunlight fell on the dry grass and on the leaves of the shrub-oaks on the hill-side, while our shadows stretched long over the meadow eastward, as if we were the only motes in its beams. It was such a light as we could not have imagined a moment before, and the air also was so warm and serene that nothing was wanting to make a paradise of that meadow. When we reflected that this was not a solitary phenomenon, never to happen

again, but that it would happen for ever and ever an infinite number of evenings, and cheer and reassure the latest child that walked there, it was more glorious still.

The sun sets on some retired meadow, where no house is visible, with all the glory and splendor that it lavishes on cities, and, perchance, as it has never set before — where there is but a solitary marsh-hawk to have his wings gilded by it, or only a musquash looks out from his cabin, and there is some little black-veined brook in the midst of the marsh, just beginning to meander, winding slowly round a decaying stump. We walked in so pure and bright a light, gilding the withered grass and leaves, so softly and serenely bright, I thought I had never bathed in such a golden flood, without a ripple or a murmur to it. The west side of every wood and rising ground gleamed like the boundary of Elysium, and the sun on our backs seemed like a gentle herdsman driving us home at evening.

So we saunter toward the Holy Land, till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever he has done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bank-side in autumn.

THOREAU'S FLUTE

We, sighing, said, 'Our Pan is dead;
His pipe hangs mute beside the river;
Around it wistful sunbeams quiver,
But Music's airy voice is fled.
Spring mourns as for untimely frost;
The bluebird chants a requiem;
The willow-blossom waits for him; —
The Genius of the wood is lost.'

Then from the flute, untouched by hands,
There came a low, harmonious breath:
'For such as he there is no death;
His life the eternal life commands;
Above man's aims his nature rose:
The wisdom of a just content
Made one small spot a continent,[1]
And turned to poetry Life's prose.

'Haunting the hills, the stream, the wild,
Swallow and aster, lake and pine,
To him grew human or divine, —
Fit mates for this large-hearted child.
Such homage Nature ne'er forgets,
And yearly on the coverlid
'Neath which her darling lieth hid
Will write his name in violets.

'To him no vain regrets belong,
Whose soul, that finer instrument,
Gave to the world no poor lament,
But wood-notes ever sweet and strong.
O lonely friend! he still will be
A potent presence, though unseen, —
Steadfast, sagacious, and serene:
Seek not for him, — he is with thee.'

Louisa May Alcott

THE ALCOTTS' CONCORD

THE ALCOTTS

WHEN, in 1840, Amos Bronson Alcott came with his wife and three little daughters to make his home in Concord, this philosopher and teacher was already a warm friend of Emerson, whom he had first met a decade earlier, and to be near whom he regarded as one of the greatest privileges of life.

Born in 1799, on his father's farm near Wolcott, Connecticut, his early years were spent amid rural surroundings, where his tasks and activities were those of the average country boy. Yet, although his parents were hard-working farmer folk, they had behind them distinguished Anglo-Saxon stock, and Alcott counted a Lord Chancellor of England and other prominent men among his forbears; the name being spelled Alcocke in former times.

From earliest childhood Amos Bronson Alcott exhibited an intense love of books and a desire for education, showing himself far in advance of other school-boys of his age; with small opportunities and slight instruction, he prepared himself, by constant reading and untiring study, for the career that he desired, that of a teacher and philosopher.

On May 23, 1830, he was married at King's Chapel, to Abigail May, daughter of Colonel Joseph May, of Boston, a woman of great strength of character fitted to share his intellectual aspirations and at the same time to excel in practical affairs. In 1832,

they moved to Boston from Germantown, Pennsylvania, where Alcott had been in charge of a school and where his second daughter, Louisa May, was born on November 29th, her father's thirty-third birthday. This daughter, destined to become the most popular story-teller for young folks, of her day, and who still holds her preëminence among the readers of the present time, became her father's mainstay and support in later years, and aided him in the realization of some of the dreams dear to his heart. Her definition of a philosopher, as 'a man up in a balloon with his family and friends holding the ropes which confine him to earth, and trying to haul him down,' admirably describes her father, whose feet were seldom on the ground, and who dwelt in an elevated sphere of thought and spirit, aloof from hum-drum matters. Like most reformers he was ready to sacrifice everything of minor importance in order to attain his ends, and even his family, to whom he was devotedly attached, were forced to pinch and scrimp, while he strove to uplift his fellows and to regenerate the social structure.

In 1834, he opened the 'Temple School' in Boston, where he put into practice his advanced educational methods, which proved too far ahead of his time to be appreciated. His innovations in the schoolroom, many of which are to-day sanctioned by the foremost educators, were scoffed at and ridiculed most cruelly, and this school proving a failure, he turned his face towards Concord, where he could be near his friend Emerson.

The Alcott family was first established in a cottage

which is described in 'Little Women' as 'Meg's first home.' In this book, their life is truthfully pictured, and the four daughters appear there as 'Meg,' 'Beth,' 'Amy,' and 'Jo,' the latter being an unmistakable portrait of Louisa Alcott herself.

The year following their removal to Concord, Mrs. Alcott's father Colonel May died, leaving her a small sum of money, which, in addition to a gift of five hundred dollars from Emerson, enabled them to purchase 'Hillside,' which later became the home of Hawthorne rechristened 'The Wayside.' In this house, so fully described in her most famous book, Louisa passed her girlhood days; a period referred to in her journal as the 'happiest days of my life.' Her one growing desire was to banish poverty from her struggling family, and she turned first to teaching as a possible means of support, and for a short time carried on a school in their barn, which was attended by the Emerson children and a few others. Her natural bent was in the direction of writing, and her first book was composed at the age of sixteen; this was a collection of fairy-tales, which was not published for some years, and in the meantime she had tried her hand at sewing, play-writing, going out to service, and had even planned to go upon the stage at one time; a project that at the last moment she had failed to carry out. This round of experiments was later recorded in her book entitled 'Work.'

Alcott's enthusiasm as a reformer of social life led him to make the experiment of founding a small colony where the life of the spirit could be lived as he

felt it should be. Unlike Emerson, who believed that it would have been wiser to advocate these higher ideals with the pen, Alcott felt that he must live them in a model community so as more vividly to impress the outer world. In order to perfect his plan for a simpler mode of life and more genuine worship, he journeyed to England to consult a group of reformers with whom he had been in correspondence. In this enterprise Emerson aided him financially, and in the fall of 1842, Alcott returned, bringing with him two English socialists, who soon joined him in the founding of his ideal community at 'Fruitlands,' in the town of Harvard. This Utopia was but short-lived, as these idealists failed sadly in the management of practical concerns; Mrs. Alcott being the one balance-wheel among them, and toiling from morn till night to provide sustenance for the band of dreamers, who desired to live on the fruits of the earth without having sufficient practical knowledge of the proper methods of obtaining these natural products. After much personal sacrifice and hardship, 'Fruitlands' was abandoned and its founder, bitterly disappointed, returned to take up his habitation in Concord.

'Fruitlands,' which was an ancient edifice at the time when Alcott took it, was for years allowed to suffer neglect and ill-usage, but a few years since it was purchased and renovated by Miss Clara Endicott Sears, on whose estate it is situated. It is now opened to the public on certain days, and contains books, manuscripts, and furnishings that were once the property of its original owners, while its story is set

forth in a charming volume by Miss Sears, entitled 'Fruitlands.'

After a futile endeavor to make both ends meet, the Alcott family moved again to Boston, where Mrs. Alcott was able to earn a small amount as a visitor to the poor, and also in keeping an employment bureau. During this period, Mr. Alcott began to hold 'Conversations' in West Street, where he gathered a small circle about him, charging a modest fee for admission. Again, in 1857, the family removed to Concord, where, after a temporary sojourn in a rented house, they settled at 'Orchard House,' where Louisa's best work was accomplished, although for nearly ten years the struggle was an incessant one. A few months after their return to Concord, Elizabeth, a lovely girl and the 'Beth' of 'Little Women,' who had been in failing health, passed away, and was buried at Sleepy Hollow; a loss that was sadly felt by the devoted family, who were on the eve of occupying their new home. 'Orchard House' holds its place as most intimately associated with the Alcott household. It was their home for twenty years, and there Louisa produced her masterpieces; there May had her studio, and it was also while in this house that Alcott was able to carry out his project for founding a School of Philosophy.

Named for its apple-orchard, which has long since passed out of existence, 'Orchard House' was forlorn enough when the Alcotts took possession, but its owners enlarged and improved it after making sure that its timbers were still sound, as prior to their oc-

cupancy it had been deemed past recovery. Under Alcott's hand it soon presented an attractive exterior, while its interior was beautified and made livable by the industrious daughters, who did both papering and painting; there May proved her skill at household decoration, and to this day walls, doors, fireplaces, and window-cases exhibit examples of her artistic work. The house, now open to the public as a literary shrine, under the auspices of the Historical Society of Concord, is yearly visited by thousands of lovers of Louisa Alcott.

Alcott's famous summer-houses were designed by him in the years 1846-47, one at 'The Wayside' and the other in Emerson's garden. The latter structure, built by the combined labor of Alcott and Thoreau, was the occasion of some disagreement between these friends, for Alcott's fanciful ideas of rustic construction and curved lines of beauty were not approved of by Thoreau with his practical knowledge of how the framework of a house should be erected, and he made merry at the result of Alcott's picturesque plan, insisting that the summer-house would soon collapse. While he was correct in his criticisms, it was nevertheless a fact that this token of friendship remained standing for about fifteen years, first as a rustic temple, and then as a picturesque ruin. It was put up during Emerson's absence in Europe, as an affectionate tribute from these two friends. During its lifetime it sheltered many groups of writers and philosophers, and, after its departure, continued its existence in pictorial form, thanks to the

EMERSON'S SUMMER-HOUSE
Built by Alcott and Thoreau

skilled pencil of Alcott's daughter May, whose pictures are found to-day in leading art museums and in private collections. From her teaching Daniel Chester French drew his earliest art inspiration, and she provided him with his first sculptor's tools.

Early in 1862, Louisa Alcott opened a Kindergarten, because urged to do so, although she longed to write and disliked teaching; after a hard struggle the project proved a failure, at which time she declared to those who still urged her to continue this work: 'I won't teach; and I *can* write, and I'll prove it.'

At the opening of the Civil War, her patriotic spirit inspired her to offer her services to her country, and she volunteered as a hospital nurse in Washington; there, after six weeks of faithful and successful service, under the most trying conditions, she broke down and was stricken with typhoid-pneumonia. After weeks of terrible illness, she was nursed back to life, but her health was never the same after this experience, with its many harrowing memories, which she later embodied in her 'Hospital Sketches.'

In 1865, Miss Alcott went abroad as a companion for an invalid lady from whom, however, she was obliged to separate after finding the strain upon her own health too great. On her return, she again devoted herself to her writing, and in 1867, in response to a request from her publishers, Roberts Brothers, began 'Little Women,' which was brought out the following year. Its success was instantaneous, and from the time of its publication its author's financial struggles were practically at an end and she was able to

realize her dream of providing for the wants of her family.

In 1870, she again visited Europe, where she spent two very delightful years; this time her circumstances enabled her to travel without financial worry and she enjoyed the company of her sister May who had been invited by a friend to take this trip. Before her return she had completed 'Little Men,' which came out on the day of her arrival, with fifty thousand advance copies sold.

Following her return from Europe Miss Alcott made her working headquarters in Boston, finding that she could not accomplish the same amount of work in Concord, where there were many interruptions and family distractions; and she wrote at this time:

'Twenty years ago I resolved to make the family independent if I could. At forty that is done. Debts are all paid, even the outlawed ones, and we have enough to be comfortable. It has cost me my health, perhaps; but as I still live, there is more for me to do, I suppose.'

Her literary successes enabled her to do much for her sister May in whose art career she was deeply interested. She sent her first to a School of Design, and then arranged for her to study under Dr. Rimmer, with whom she did excellent work in modelling. After their trip abroad in 1870, she sent May to Europe to study, first in 1873, and again in 1877; there the latter was making notable progress at the time of her meeting with Ernest Nieriker, a young Swiss, who shared

her interest in art and to whom she became engaged. They were married in London, in 1878, and the marriage proved an ideally happy one, but was tragically terminated one year later when May died a few weeks after giving birth to a daughter. This was a terrible grief to all the family, and especially to Louisa who had high hopes for her sister's future.

Two years before May's death, Mrs. Alcott, who had been in failing health for some time, passed away, following her removal from 'Orchard House' to the new home of her daughter Mrs. Pratt, who had been a widow for some years. This was known as the 'Thoreau House,' and it was there that Henry Thoreau died in 1862. After the death of Sophia Thoreau it was sold to Mrs. Pratt, who desired a home for herself and children, and there her sister Louisa, who had assisted in its purchase, made her home when she was not in Boston. This house remains to-day in the possession of the Pratt family, who occupy it. From the close of 1877, 'Orchard House' ceased to be the family home, although it was opened in 1879 for the first session of the School of Philosophy. The following year saw the completion of the little Hillside Chapel, designed by Alcott, which was erected upon his grounds.

Alcott's dream of opening a School of Philosophy was realized in the completion of the simple structure which stood well to the left of 'Orchard House.' For more than twenty years this remained one of the sights of Concord, although the School was carried on for less than a decade. Recently, this building, which

had been moved from its first site, has been purchased by the Memorial Association, and restored to its original position.

The little chapel was very primitive in construction with wide spaces between the rough boards of the walls where creeping vines found entrance and twined their way with decorative effect. Upon a low platform in a wide alcove stood the table at which the lecturers placed themselves, and camp-chairs, arranged for comfort rather than in any regular order, furnished seats for the audience. Over the mantel hung an engraving of the 'School of Athens,' while there were other engravings on the walls, which were changed from time to time, illustrating various classic themes; busts of Plato, Pestalozzi, Emerson, and others were placed about, and a mask of Anaxagoras hung upon the wall.

During the summer sessions the mercury often mounted to ninety degrees, a fact that failed to disconcert the philosophers or curb their eloquence, though at times the less philosophic and appreciative slipped through the doorway and sought the cooling shade of the adjacent hillside. Dr. Bartol, who was a prominent figure in these days, not infrequently delivered essays some three hours in length, uttered in a chanting tone which, it was said, caused even Alcott to take extended naps.

Undoubtedly many cranks were attracted to the town by this famous School, but for the most part the assembly was composed of scholarly and aspiring truth-seekers. The choicest minds of the country

were to be found there, making the audience hardly less remarkable than the speakers, among whom Dr. Harris was one of the most notable; Alcott was universally beloved and his presence and 'conversations' inspired an intense interest; Emerson's presence made two summers especially noteworthy, and Frank Sanborn contributed much of wit and classic learning to the 'Hillside' concourse. The School drew together from all parts of the country those interested in speculative philosophy, and its wide range of intellectual sympathies and its inclusion of poetry and general literature made it an important landmark in the field of spiritual culture in the nineteenth century.

In the fall of 1882, Mr. Alcott suffered a stroke of paralysis, from which he never fully recovered, and from this time to the end, which did not come until six years later, his daughters devoted themselves to his comfort, and shared the duty of tending him in his enfeebled state. It was a great satisfaction to Louisa, whose life had been dedicated to the upholding of her father's ideals, to be able to provide the aged man with the care and the comforts that he might crave.

In 1885, Miss Alcott rented a furnished house in Louisburg Square, Boston, to which the family moved, and where she assisted in caring for her father until her own enfeebled health forbade further exertion. At this time, her sister May's little daughter also came to make her home with her aunt, to whom she brought much sunshine as well as added responsibility.

In December, 1886, illness obliged Miss Alcott to seek rest and quiet at the home of her friend Dr. Lawrence, in Roxbury, where she improved in health and was able to visit her relatives frequently; in July, 1887, she went to Concord for the last time and busied herself with looking over papers, although she was equal to but slight exertion.

After some weeks spent at Princeton, she returned to the home of Dr. Lawrence, on whose ministrations she greatly depended, and from there visited her father as often as she was able to do so. Early in March, 1888, she drove to Boston to see him, too preoccupied with the thought that his end was at hand to note that she had failed to put on a heavy wrap, and from a severe cold thus contracted she never rallied. Her father died on the 4th of March, and on the 6th, the day of his funeral, she passed away, practically worn out after a life of overwork, and one which had literally been a living sacrifice to the lovable and unpractical philosopher, on whose birthday she entered the world, and on whose burial day she took leave of it. Alcott was a man who seemed out of place in a practical age, and yet his educational methods were in many respects those that are to-day being adopted in the most advanced schools. He possessed a captivating and childlike personality and bore about with him an air of serene repose. He was tall and spare, his fine head crowned with silvery locks, his complexion remarkable for clearness and purity. He loved his family devotedly, and at the same time tried them sorely by his sublime indifference to mundane affairs.

Of his famous daughter her biographer has said: 'Much as she loved literature, it was not an end in itself, but a means. Her heart was so bound up in her family — she felt it so fully to be her sacred mission to provide for their wants — that she sacrificed to it all ambitious dreams, health, leisure, everything but the integrity of her soul. But as "he that loseth his life shall find it," she has undoubtedly achieved a really greater work than if she had not had the constant stimulus to exertion. In her own line of work she is unsurpassed. . . . Her own deep nature shines through all the experiences of her characters and impresses upon the children's hearts a sense of reality and truth. She charms them wisely to love the common virtues of truth, unselfishness, kindness, industry, and honesty.'

CHAPTER XIX

REFLECTIONS FROM ORCHARD HOUSE

My neighbors flatter me in telling me that I have one of the best placed and most picturesque houses in our town. I know very well the secret of what they praise. 'Tis simply adapting the color and repairs to the architecture, and holding these in keeping with the spot.

A house, like a person, invites by amiable reserves, as if it loved to be introduced in perspective and reached by courteous approaches. Let it show bashfully behind shrubberies, screen its proportions decorously in plain tints, not thrust itself rudely, like an inn, upon the street at cross-roads. A wide lawn in front, sloping to the road gracefully, gives it the stately air and courtly approach. I like the ancient mansions for this reason; these old Puritan residences for their unpretending air, their sober tints, in strict keeping with Wordsworth's rule of coloring, viz. that of the sod about the grounds. A slight exaltation of this defines best the architecture by distinguishing it from surrounding objects in the landscape. Modest tints are always becoming. White and red intolerable. And for some variety in dressing, the neighboring barks of shrubbery suggest and best characterize the coloring.

ALCOTT'S WOODLAND GATE

As for fences and gates, I was told that mine were unlike any others in the world, yet as good as anybody's, hereby meaning to praise them, I infer. If less durable than others, the cost is inconsiderable, and has the associated pleasure, besides, of having come out of such ideal capital as I had invested in my own head and hands. A common carpenter would have spent more time in planing and fixing his pickets and set something in straight lines with angular corners to deform the landscape; then the painter must have followed with some tint mixed neither by nature nor art. Now my work delights my eyes whenever I step out-of-doors, adding its ornament to the spot. Grotesque it may be with its knotted ornaments, Druid supports, yet in keeping with the woods behind it. Besides, what pleasure the construction has given! Form, color, ornamentation alike concern the builder and occupant, as they were blossoms of his taste and of the landscape. A good architect is both builder and colorist, and should be a good man besides, according to the ancient authorities.

Houses have their history, are venerable on account of their age and origin. Even our newly settled country of but a century or two, has already crowned her homesteads still standing with royal honors. Mine, I conjecture, is not far from one hundred and fifty years' standing. It was a first-class country-house in its day, with its window-seats in parlor and chambers, ornamental summers and casements, its ample fireplaces, and lean-to on the northern side. Like most of its period it was open to the road with

overshadowing elms still embowering the mansion; had a lion-headed door-knocker, and huge chimney-tops surmounting the gables. Of learned ancestry moreover; having been the homestead of a brother of President Hoar, of Harvard College, and remained in possession of members of that venerable family down to near the beginning of the present century. The site is hardly surpassed by any on the old Boston road; the woods behind crowning the range of hills running north almost to the village, and bordering east on Wayside, Hawthorne's last residence. It must have been chosen by an original settler, probably coming with the Reverend Peter Bulkeley from England in 1635.

The ancient elms before the house, of a hundred years' standing and more, are the pride of the yard. It were sacrilege to remove a limb or twig unless decayed, so luxuriant and far-spreading, overshadowing the roof and gables, yet admitting the light into hall and chambers. Sunny rooms, sunny household. 'Build your house,' says a mystic author, 'upon a firm foundation, and let your aspect be towards the east, where the sun rises, that so you may enjoy its fruitfulness in your household and orchards.'

Whether the first settler planted these elms, or whether they are survivors of the primitive forest which was felled to make way and room for the rude shelter of the hardy settlers, is not ascertained. Their roots penetrate primitive soil; the surrounding grounds have become productive of the industry and skill, mellowed and meliorated by the humanities of their

descendants. They came honestly by their homesteads, paying their swarthy claimants fair prices for them; the landscape is still inviting by its prairie aspects, its brook-sides and meadows where the redmen trod.

It was these broad meadows beside the 'Grass ground River' that tempted alike the white and red man — the one for pasturage, the other for fishing — and brought the little colony through the wilderness to form the settlement named 'Musketaquid,' after the river of that name (signifying grass ground), and later taking that of Concord, not without note in history:

> Beneath low hills, in the broad interval
> Through which at will our Indian rivulet
> Winds mindful still of sannup and of squaw,
> Whose pipe and arrow oft the plough unburies;
> Here, in pine houses, built of new-fallen trees,
> Supplanters of the tribe, the planters dwelt.

The view from the rustic seat overlooking my house commands the amphitheatre in which the house stands, and through which flows Mill brook, bordered on the south and east by the Lincoln woods. It is a quiet prospect and might be taken for an English landscape; needs but a tower or castle overtopping the trees surrounding it. The willows by the rock bridge over the brook, the winding lane once the main track of travel before the turnpike, branching off from the old Boston road by Emerson's door, was built, adds to the illusion, while on the east stands the pine-clad hill, Hawthorne's favorite haunt, and hiding his last residence from sight.

On the southwest is an ancient wood, Thoreau's pride, beyond which is Walden Pond, distant about a mile from my house, and best reached by the lane opening opposite Hawthorne's. Fringed on all sides by woods, the interval, once a mill-pond, is now in meadow and garden land, the slopes planted in vineyards, market gardens and orchards lining the road along which stand the farmers' houses visible in the opening.

This road has more than a local interest. If any road may claim the originality of being entitled to the name American, it is this — since along its dust the British regulars retreated from their memorable repulse at the Old North Bridge, the Concord military following fast upon their heels, and from the hill-tops giving them salutes of musketry till they disappeared beyond Lexington, and gave a day to history.

An agricultural town from the first, it is yet such in large measure; though like others in its neighborhood becoming suburban and commercial. Fields once in corn and grass are now in vineyard and orchards, tillage winding up the slopes from the lowlands to the hill-tops. The venerable woods once crowning these are fast falling victims to the axe. The farmsteads are no longer the rural homes they were when every member of the family took part in domestic affairs; foreign help serves where daughters once served; they with their brothers having left the housekeeping and farming for school, factories, trade, a profession, and things are drifting towards an urban and municipal civilization, the metropolis extending

its boundaries, and absorbing the townships for many miles round.

Moreover, the primitive features of the landscape are being obliterated by the modern facilities for business and travel, less perhaps than in most places lying so near the metropolis; the social still less than the natural; the descendants of the primitive fathers of the settlement cherishing a pride of ancestry not unbecoming in a republic, less favorable for the perpetuation of family distinctions and manners than in countries under monarchical rule.

THOREAU

Who nearer Nature's life would truly come
Must nearest come to him of whom I speak;
He all kinds knew, — the vocal and the dumb;
Masterful in genius was he, and unique,
Patient, sagacious, tender, frolicsome.
This Concord Pan would oft his whistle take,
And forth from wood and fen, field, hill, and lake,
Trooping around him, in their several guise,
The shy inhabitants their haunts forsake:
Then he, like Esop, man would satirize,
Hold up the image wild to clearest view
Of undiscerning manhood's puzzled eyes,
And mocking say, 'Lo! mirrors here for you:
Be true as these, if ye would be more wise.'

CHAPTER XX

NEIGHBORS

LIKE its suburban neighbor beside the Charles, our village seated along the banks of its Indian stream spreads a rural cradle for the fresher literature; and aside from its advantages it well deserves its name for its quiet scenery and population. Moreover, few spots in New England have won a like literary repute. The rural muse has traversed these fields, meadows, woodlands, the brook-sides, the river; caught the harmony of its changing skies, and portrayed their spirit in books which are fit to live while letters delight and nature charms her lovers. Had Homer, had Virgil fairer promptings than our landscape affords? Had Shakespeare or Goethe a more luxuriant simplicity than ours? Only the wit to say or sing these the poet needs; and of this our neighborhood has not less than many sounding cities.

Plain as our landscape is it has special attractions for the scholar who courts quiet surroundings, scenery not too exciting, yet stimulating to genial and uninterrupted studies. If the hills command no very broad horizon, the prospect is sufficiently sylvan to give an agreeable variety without confusing the mind, while the river in good part compensates for the sameness as it winds sluggishly along the confines of the village, flowing by the monument into the distance through the meadows. Thoreau, writing of it, jo-

cosely says, 'It is remarkable for the gentleness of its current, which is hardly perceptible, and some have ascribed to its influence the proverbial moderation of the inhabitants of Concord, as celebrated in the Revolution and on other occasions. It has been proposed that the town should adopt for its coat-of-arms a field verdant, with the Concord River circling nine times around it.'

Cities with all their advantages have something hostile to liberal learning, the seductions are so subtle and accost the senses so openly on all sides. A suburban neighborhood at least, if not rural, were most friendly and inviting. Nor can I conceive an academic culture fairly conducted without the stimulus which sylvan surroundings afford a student; not without its moral had the ancient schools their academic groves and walks, their gardens and rural influences. A professorship were those for genius and the Graces. The woods have a strange charm singularly sane and wholesome, a walk in forest paths at all seasons lends a certain enchantment to the fancy and stimulates to thought. Alone, or in company with another, one is enriched with luxuriant images, his philosophy becomes harmonized with life, and he is resolved for the moment into his primitive freshness and innocency.

One's outlook is a part of his virtue. Does it matter nothing to him what objects accost him whenever he glances from his windows, or steps out-of-doors? He who is far weaned from the landscape, or indifferent to it, as not to derive a sweet and robust habit of

character therefrom, seems out of keeping with nature and himself. I suspect something amiss in him who has no love, no enthusiasm for his surroundings, and that his friendships, if such he possess, are of a cold and isolate quality at best; one even questions, at times, whether the residents of cities, where art has thrown around them a world of its own, are compensated by all this luxury of display,— to say nothing of the social artifices wont to steal into their costly compliments, — for the simple surroundings of the country man, which prompt to manliness and true gentility. A country dwelling without shrubbery, hills near or in the distance, a forest and water view, if but a rivulet, seems so far incomplete as if the occupants themselves were raw and impoverished. Wood and water-god both, man loves to traverse the forests, wade the streams, and confess his kindred alliance with primeval things. He leaps not from the woods into civility at a single bound, neither comes from cities and conversations freed from the wildness of his disposition. Something of the forester stirs within him when occasion provokes, as if men were trees transformed, and delighted to claim their affinities with their sylvan ancestry.

Man never tires of Nature's scene,
Himself the liveliest evergreen.

My friend and neighbor (Thoreau) united these qualities of sylvan and human in a more remarkable manner than any whom it has been my happiness to know. Lover of the wild, he lived a borderer on the

confines of civilization, jealous of the least encroachment upon his possessions.

> Society were all but rude
> In his umbrageous solitude.

I had never thought of knowing a man so thoroughly of the country, and so purely a son of nature. I think he had the profoundest passion for it of any one of his time; and had the human sentiment been as tender and pervading, would have given us pastorals of which Virgil and Theocritus might have envied him the authorship had they chanced to be his contemporaries. As it was, he came nearer the antique spirit than any of our native poets, and touched the fields and groves and streams of his native town with a classic interest that shall not fade. Some of his verses are suffused with an elegiac tenderness, as if the woods and brooks bewailed the absence of their Lycidas, and murmured their griefs meanwhile to one another, responsive like idyls. Living in close companionship with nature, his muse breathed the spirit and voice of poetry.

The most welcome of companions was this plain countryman. One seldom meets with thoughts like his, coming so scented of mountain and field breezes and rippling springs, so like a luxuriant clod from under forest leaves, moist and mossy with earth spirits. His presence was tonic, like ice-water in dog-days to the parched citizen pent in chambers and under brazen ceilings. Welcome as the gurgle of brooks and dipping of pitchers, — then drink and be cool! He

seemed one with things, of nature's essence and core, knit of strong timbers, — like a wood and its inhabitants. He of all men seemed to be the native New Englander, as much so as the oak, the granite ledge; our best sample of an indigenous American, untouched by the old country, unless he came down rather from Thor, the Northman, whose name he bore.

A peripatetic philosopher, and out-of-doors for the best part of his days and nights, he had manifold seasons in him; the manners of an animal of probity and virtue unstained. Of all our moralists, he seemed the wholesomest, the busiest, and the best republican citizen in the world; always minding his own affairs.

Nature, poetry, life, not politics, not strict science, not society as it is, were his preferred themes. The world was holy, the things seen symbolizing the things unseen, and thus worthy of worship, calling men out-of-doors and under the firmament for health and wholesomeness to be insinuated into their souls, not as idolaters, but as idealists. His religion was of the most primitive type, inclusive of all natural creatures and things, even to 'the sparrow that falls to the ground,' though never by a shot of his, and for whatsoever was manly in men, his worship was comparable to that of the priests and heroes of all time.

A scholar by birthright, and an author, his fame had not, at his decease, travelled far from the banks of the rivers he described in his books; but one hazards only the truth in affirming of his prose, that in substance and pith, it surpasses that of any naturalist of his time; and he is sure of a large reading in the future.

There are fairer fishes in his pages than any swimming in our streams; some sleep of his on the banks of the Merrimack by moonlight that Egypt never rivalled; a morning of which Memnon might have envied the music, and a greyhound he once had, meant for Adonis; frogs better than any of Aristophanes; apples wilder than Adam's.

If one would learn the wealth of wit there was in this plain man, the information, the poetry, the piety, he should have accompanied him on an afternoon walk to Walden, or elsewhere about the skirts of his village residence. Pagan as he might outwardly appear, yet he was the hearty worshipper of whatsoever is sound and wholesome in nature, a piece of russet probity and strong sense, that nature delighted to own and honor.

Four months before Thoreau's death Alcott wrote to a friend:

We had thought this oldest inhabitant of our Planet would have chosen to stay and see it fairly dismissed into the Chaos (out of which he has brought such precious jewels, — gifts to friends, to mankind generally, diadems for fame to coming followers, forgetful of his own claims to the honors) before he chose simply to withdraw from the spaces and times he has adorned with the truth of his genius. But the masterly work is nearly done for us here. And our woods and fields are sorrowing, though not in sombre, but in robes of white, so becoming to the piety and probity they have known so long, and

soon are to miss. There has been none such since Pliny, and it will be long before there comes his like; the most sagacious and wonderful Worthy of his time, and a marvel to coming ones.

Hawthorne was of the darker temperament and tendencies. His sensitiveness and sadness were native, and he cultivated them apparently alike by solitude, the pursuits and studies in which he indulged, till he became almost fated to know gayer hours only by stealth. By disposition friendly, he seemed the victim of his temperament, as if he sought distance, if not his pen, to put himself in communication, and possible sympathy with others, with his dearest friends even. His reserve and imprisonment were more distant and close, while the desire for conversation was livelier, than any one I have known. There was something of strangeness even in his cherished intimacies, as if he set himself afar from all and from himself with the rest; the most diffident of men, as coy as a maiden, he could only be won by some cunning artifice, his reserve was so habitual, his isolation so entire, the solitude so vast. How distant people were from him, the world they lived in, how he came to know so much about them, by what stratagem he got into his own house or left it, was a marvel. Fancy fixed, he was not to be jostled from himself for a moment, his mood was so persistent. There he was in the twilight, there he stayed.

What neighbor of his ever caught him on the highway, or ventured to approach his threshold?

Yet if by chance admitted, welcome in a voice that

a woman might own for its hesitancy and tenderness; his eyes telling the rest. Your intrusion was worth the courage it cost; it emboldened to future assaults to carry this fort of bashfulness. During all the time he lived near me, our estates being separated only by a gate and shaded avenue, I seldom caught sight of him; and when I did it was but to lose it the moment he suspected he was visible; oftenest seen on his hill-top screened behind the shrubbery and disappearing like a hare into the bush when surprised. I remember of his being in my house but twice, and then he was so ill at ease that he found excuse for leaving politely forthwith, 'the stove it was so hot,' 'the clock ticked so loud.'

He strove by disposition to be sunny and genial, traits not native to him. Constitutionally shy, recluse, melancholy, only by shafts of wit and flow of humor could he deliver himself. There was a soft sadness in his smile, a reserve in his glance, telling how isolate he was.

Of Emerson, who was his best friend, Alcott wrote:

See our Ion standing there — his audience, his manuscript, before him — himself an auditor, as he reads, of the Genius sitting behind him, and to whom he defers, eagerly catching the words — the words — as if the accents were first reaching his ears too, and entrancing alike oracle and auditor. We admire the stately sense, the splendor of diction, and are surprised as we listen. Even his hesitancy between the delivery of his periods, his perilous passages from

paragraph to paragraph of manuscript, we have almost learned to like, as if he were but sorting his keys meanwhile for opening his cabinets; the spring of locks following, himself as eager as any of us to get sight of his specimens, as they come forth from their proper drawers; and we wait willingly till his gem is out glittering; admire the setting, too, scarcely less; than the jewel itself. The magic minstrel and speaker! whose rhetoric voiced as by organ-stops, delivers the sentiment from his breast in cadences peculiar to himself; now hurling it forth on the ear, echoing; then, as his mood and matter invite it, dying like

> Music of mild lutes
> Or silver coated flutes,
> Or the concealing winds that can convey
> Never their tune to the rude ear of day.

He works his miracles with it, as Hermes did, his voice conducting the sense alike to eye and ear by its lyrical movement and refraining melody. So his compositions affect us, not as logic linked in syllogisms, but as voluntaries rather, or preludes, in which one is not tied to any design of air, but may vary his key or note at pleasure, as if improvised without any particular scope of argument; each period, each paragraph, being a perfect note in itself; however it may chance chime with its accompaniments in the piece; as a waltz of wandering stars, a dance of Hesperus with Orion. His rhetoric dazzles by circuits, contrasts, antitheses; Imagination, as in all sprightly minds, being his wand of power. He comes along his own paths, too, and always in his own fashion.

What though he build his piers downwards from the firmament to the tumbling tides, and so throw his radiant span across the fissures of his argument, and himself pass over the frolic arches — Ariel wise — is the skill less admirable, the masonry less secure for its singularity?

. . . . . .

The day shall come when this man's genius shall shine beyond the circle of his own city and nation. It shall flash across the wide water, and receive the homage of other peoples. Emerson is destined to be the high literary name of this age. Other men we have who ply small trade in the nooks and corners of this wide sea, and whose wares are peddled at this place and that; but this man's genius is cosmopolitan, and shall be in demand wherever man has risen above the mere mechanics and utilities of life.

EMERSON

Misfortune to have lived not knowing thee!
'Twere not high living, nor to noblest end,
Who, dwelling near, learned not sincerity,
Rich friendship's ornament that still doth lend
To life its consequence and propriety.
Thy fellowship was my culture, noble friend:
By the hand thou took'st me, and did'st condescend
To bring me straightway into thy fair guild;
And life-long hath it been high compliment
By that to have been known, and thy friend styled
Given to rare thought and to good learning bent;
Whilst in my straits an angel on me smiled.
Permit me, then, thus honored, still to be
A scholar in thy university.

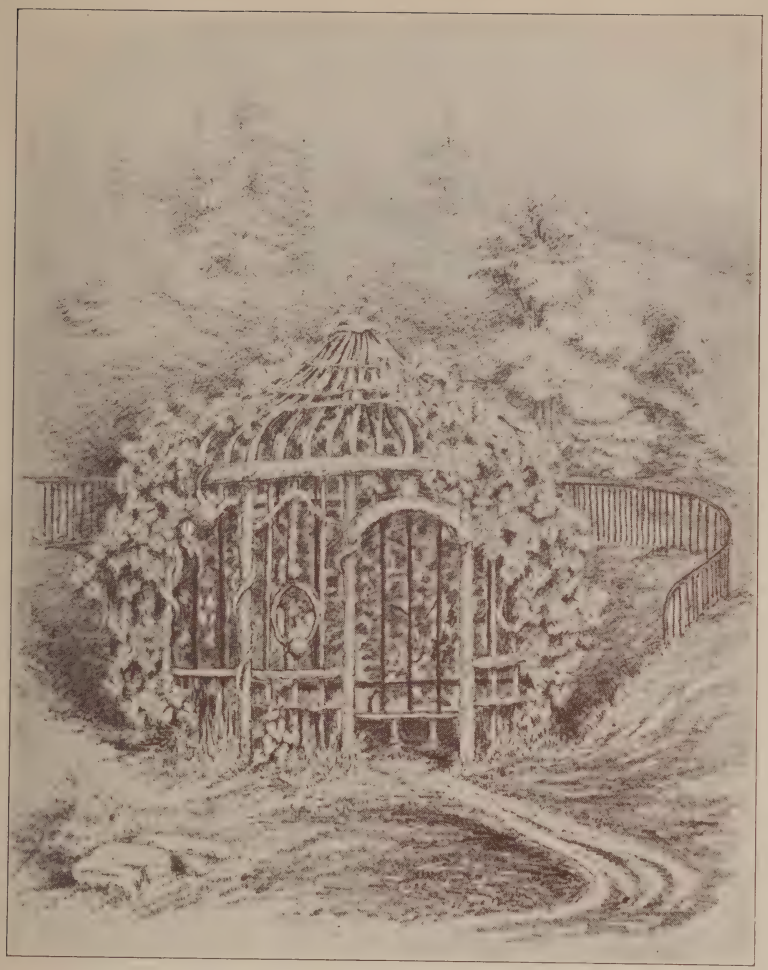
CHAPTER XXI

ORCHARD AND GARDEN

ORCHARDS are even more personal in their charms than gardens, as they are more nearly human creations. Ornaments in the homestead, they subordinate other features of it; and such is their sway over the landscape that house and owner appear accidents without them. So men delight to build in an ancient orchard, when so fortunate as to possess one, that they may live in the beauty of its surroundings.

Orchards are among the most coveted possessions; trees of ancient standing, and vines, being firm friends and royal neighbors forever. The profits, too, are as wonderful as their longevity. And if antiquity can add any worth to a thing, what possession has a man more noble than these? so unlike most others, which are best at first and grow worse till worth nothing; while fruit-trees and vines increase in worth and goodness for ages. An orchard in bloom is one of the most pleasing sights the eye beholds; as if the firmament had stooped to the tree-tops and touched every twig with spangles, and man had mingled his essence with the seasons, in its flushing tokens. And how rich the spectacle at the autumnal harvest:

> Behold the bending boughs, with store of fruit they tear,
> And what they have brought forth, for weight they scarce can bear.



ARBOR AT 'ORCHARD HOUSE'

Apples are general favorites. Every eye covets, every hand reaches to them. It is a noble fruit; the friend of immortality, its virtues blush to be tasted. Every Muse delights in it, as its mythology shows, from the gardens of the Hesperides to the orchard of Plato. A basket of pearmains, golden russets, or any of the choice kinds, standing in sight, shall perfume the scholar's composition as it refreshes his genius. He may snatch wildness from the woods, get shrewdness from cities, learning from libraries and universities, compliments from courts. But for subtlety of thought, for sovereign sense, for color, the graces of diction and behavior, he best betakes himself

> Where on all sides the apples scattered lie,
> Each under its own tree.

As orchards to man, so are flowers and herbs to women. Indeed the garden appears celibate, as does the house, without womanly hands to plant and care for it. Here she is in place — suggests lovely images of her personal accomplishments, as if civility were first conceived in such cares, and retired unwillingly even, to houses and chambers; something being taken from their elegancy and her nobleness by an undue absorption of her thoughts in household affairs. But there is a fitness in her association with flowers and sweet herbs, as with social hospitalities, showing her affinities with the magical and medical, as if she were the plant All-Heal, and mother of comforts and spices. Once the herb-garden was a necessary part of every homestead; every country-house had one well

stocked, and there was a matron inside skilled in their secret virtues, having the knowledge of how her

> Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they
> Have their acquaintance there,

her memory running back to the old country from whence they first came, and of which they retained the fragrance. Are not their names refreshing? with the superstitions concerning the sign under which they were to be gathered, the quaint spellings; — mint, roses, fennel, coriander, sweet-cicily, celandine, summer savory, smellage, rosemary, dill, caraway, lavender, tanzy, thyme, balm, myrrh; these and many more, and all good for many an ail; sage, too, sovereign sage, best of all — excellent for longevity — of which to-day's stock seems to be running low

> Why should man die? so doth the sentence say,
> When sage grows in his garden day by day?

This persuasion that the thing near us, and under our feet, stands in that relationship from some natural affinity they have to our welfare, appears to be most firmly rooted with respect to the medical herbs, whether growing wild in the fields and woods, or about the old homesteads, though the names of most of them are now forgotten.

A slight reference to the herbals and receipt books of the last century would show the good uses to which they were applied, as that the virtues of common-sense are also disowned, and oftentimes trodden under foot. Certainly, they are less esteemed than formerly, being superseded, for the most part, by drugs less effi-

cacious because less related geographically to our flesh, and not finding acquaintance therewith. Doubtless many superstitions were cherished about them in ancient heads, yet all helpful to the cure. The sweet fennel had its place in the rural garden, and was valued, not as a spice merely, but as a sacred seed, associated with worship, sprigs of it, as of caraway and dill, being taken to the pews, for appetizing the service. So the balm and rue had their sacredness. Pliny commends these natives to every housekeeper. 'A good housewife,' he says, 'goes to her herb-garden, instead of a spice shop, for seasonings, and thus preserves the health of her family, by saving her purse.'

Rise with the sun if you would keep the commandments. The sleep you get before midnight goes to virtue; after sunrise, to vice. 'It is wise,' says Aristotle, 'to be up before daybreak, for such habit contributes to health, wealth, and wisdom.' If this virtue, commended alike by antiquity and by our sense of self-respect, has fallen into discredit in modern times, it was practised by our forefathers and bore its fruits.

Our instincts are idealists. Contradicting impressions of the senses, they prompt us forth to the noblest aims and endeavors. Aspirants for the best, they prick us forward to its attainment, the more successfully as our theories of life lift us above the plains of precedent and routine, whereon the senses confine us, to the mount of vision and of renovating ideas. Nor are these too lofty or too beautiful to be unattainable. 'Tis when practice strays wide and falls below that

they appear visionary and fall into disrepute. Only those who mount the summits command the valleys at their base.

Enthusiasm is essential to the attainment of any high endeavor; without which incentive one is not sure of his equality to the humblest undertaking even. And he attempts little worth living for if he expects completing his task in an ordinary lifetime. His translation is for the continuance of his work here begun, but for whose completion time and opportunity were all too narrow and brief. Himself is the success or failure. Step by step one climbs the pinnacles of excellence; life itself is but the stretch for that mountain of holiness. Opening here with humanity, 'tis the aiming at divinity in ever ascending circles of aspiration and endeavor. Who ceases to aspire, dies. Our pursuits are our prayers; our ideals our gods.

LOUISA ALCOTT'S CONCORD

The Concord of Louisa Alcott was an intensely personal sphere, and in surveying it as pictured by her facile pen, we are enabled to visualize its social life with marvelous exactitude; she has embodied in her works the atmosphere and spirit of her time, and has shown us a miniature New England of her day, with its ideals, thrift, patriotism, neighborliness and intense interest in education. Her 'Little Men' and 'Little Women,' so obviously those of her immediate circle, were at the same time typical little men and maids, not only of her own day, but of every day; for they were vividly alive creations, and therein lies the secret of their lasting popularity. Unlike Thoreau's impersonal impressions of Concord as a lovely dwelling-place, Louisa Alcott shows it, as a setting for the New England state-of-mind, and consequently the following fragmentary selections, gleaned from her writings, should aid in rounding out the picture of that 'Classic Concord' in which she modestly believed herself a humble figure. A point of view far removed from the verdict of posterity, for, to the average literary pilgrim who visits Concord, the memory of her personality looms as large as does that of any one of her distinguished fellow townsmen; while the homes where she dwelt, remain the most sought literary shrines.

CHAPTER XXII

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES AND OTHERS

My wise mother, anxious to give me a strong body to support a lively brain, turned me loose in the country and let me run wild, learning of Nature what no books can teach, and being led — as those who love her seldom fail to be —

Through Nature up to Nature's God.

I remember running over the hills just at dawn one summer morning, and pausing to rest in the silent woods, saw through an arch of trees, the sun rise over river, hill, and wide green meadows as I never saw it before.

The moss was like velvet, and as I ran under the arches of yellow and red leaves I sang for joy, my heart was so bright and the world so beautiful. I stopped at the end of the walk and saw the sunshine out over the wide Virginia Meadows.

It seemed like going through a dark life, or grave, into heaven beyond. A very strange and solemn feeling came over me as I stood there, with no sound but the rustle of the pines, no one near me, and the sun so glorious, as for me alone. It seemed as if I felt God, as I never did before, and I prayed in my heart that I might keep that happy sense of nearness all my life; . . . and in the hush of that morning hour I always felt that I 'got religion,' as the phrase goes. A new and vital sense of His presence, tender and sustaining as

a father's arms, came to me then, never to change through forty years of life's vicissitudes, but to grow stronger for the sharp discipline of poverty and pain, sorrow and success.

Those Concord days were the happiest of my life, for we had charming playmates in the little Emersons, Channings, Hawthornes, and Goodwins, with the illustrious parents and their friends to enjoy our pranks and share our excursions.

Plays in the barn were a favorite amusement and we dramatized the fairy tales in great style. Our giant came tumbling off a loft when Jack cut down the squash-vine running up a ladder to represent the immortal bean. Cinderella rolled away in a vast pumpkin, and a long black pudding was lowered by invisible hands to fasten itself on the nose of the woman who wasted her three wishes.

Pilgrims journeyed over the hill with scrip and staff, and cockle shells in their hats; fairies held their pretty revels among the whispering birches, and the strawberry parties in the rustic arbor were honored by poets and philosophers, who fed us on their wit and wisdom while the little maids served more than mortal food.

These playdays were followed by years of household drudgery and a constant struggle to supply the necessities of life. She wrote in 1850:

I get very little time to write or think, for my working days have begun, and when school is over Anna wants me; so I have no quiet. I think a little

solitude every day is good for me. In the quiet I see my faults, and try to mend them; but, deary me, I don't get on at all.

I used to imagine my mind a room in confusion, and I was to put it in order, so I swept out useless thoughts and dusted foolish fancies away, and furnished it with good resolutions and began again. But cobwebs got in. I'm not a good housekeeper, and never get my room in nice order. I once wrote a poem about it when I was fourteen, and called it 'My Little Kingdom.' It is still hard to rule it, and always will be, I think.

In 1853 Louisa Alcott was striving to earn a small amount of money, first by teaching, and then by doing housework.

In January I started a little school; E. W., W. A., two L.'s, two H.'s, about a dozen in our parlor. In May, when my school was closed, I went to L. as a second-girl. I needed the change, could do the wash, and was glad to earn my $2 a week. Home in October with $32 for my wages. After two days' rest, began school again with 10 children. Anna went to Syracuse to teach. Father to the West to try his luck; so poor, so hopeful, so serene. God be with him! Mother had several boarders, and May got on well at school; . . . A hard year. Summer distasteful and lonely, winter tiresome with school and people I don't like.

The hum-drum existence still continued through the year following, when she exclaimed:

I have neglected my journal for months, so must write it up: School for me month after month. Mother

busy with boarders and sewing. Father doing as well as a philosopher can in a money-loving world.

Her father having built high hopes upon the success of a trip to the West returned home sadly disappointed.

In February Father came home. Paid his way, but no more. A dramatic scene when he arrived in the night. We were waked by hearing the bell. Mother flew down, crying 'My husband!' We rushed after, and five white figures embraced the half-frozen wanderer who came in hungry, tired, cold and disappointed, but smiling bravely and serene as ever.

We fed and warmed and brooded over him, longing to ask if he had made any money; but no one did till May said, after he had told all the pleasant things, 'Well, did people pay you?' Then with a queer look, he opened his pocket-book and showed one dollar, saying with a smile that made our eyes fill, 'only that! My overcoat was stolen and I had to buy a shawl. Many promises were not kept, and travelling is costly but I have opened the way, and another year shall do better.'

I shall never forget how beautifully Mother answered him, though the dear, hopeful soul had built much on his success; but with a beaming face she kissed him saying: 'I call that doing very well. Since you are safely home, dear, we don't ask anything more.'

Anna and I choked down our tears, and took a little lesson in real love which we never forgot, nor the look that the tired man and the tender woman gave one

another. It was half tragic and half comic, for Father was very dirty and sleepy, and Mother in a big night-cap and funny old jacket. (I begin to see the strong contrasts and the fun and follies in everyday life about this time.)

The anti-slavery movement found in Alcott an enthusiastic supporter, and the abolitionists as well as the philosophers were cordially welcomed to his home. Among the former were numbered the family of John Brown, whose coming greatly increased the household burdens, always so cheerfully borne by all.

John Brown's daughters came to board, and upset my plans of rest and writing when the report and the sewing were done. I had my fit of woe in the garret on the fat rag-bag, and then put my papers away and fell to work housekeeping. I think disappointment must be good for me I get so much of it; and the constant thumping Fate gives me may be a mellowing process, so I shall be a ripe and sweet old pippin before I die.

Saturday we had J. G. Whittier, Charlotte Cushman, Mrs. Stebbins, the sculptress, and Mr. Stuart, conductor of the underground railroad of this charming free country. So you see our humble place of abode is perking up, and when the 'great authoress and artist' are fairly out of the shell, we shall be an honor to our country and terror to the foe, provided good fortune don't addle or bad fortune smash us.

Father continues to stir up the schools like a mild pudding stick, Mother to sing Hebron among her pots and pans, Anna and the Prince Consort to bill and coo in the little dove-cot, Oranthy Bluggage to launch chips on the Atlantic and make a gigantic blot of her-

self in working the vessel, Abby to teach the fine arts and play propriety for the family, and the old house to put its best foot forward and hoot at the idea of ever running to the chaos from which it came.

In May, 1860, she tells of another excitement in the town:

Sanborn was nearly kidnapped for being a friend of John Brown; but his sister rescued him when he was handcuffed, and the scamps drove off. Great ferment in town. A meeting and general flurry.

In the same month her sister Anna was married to John Pratt, and Louisa's journal chronicles:

Meg's wedding. The dear girl was married on the 23d, the same day as Mother's wedding. A lovely day; the house full of sunshine, flowers, friends, and happiness. Uncle S. J. May married them, with no fuss, but much love; and we all stood round her. She in her silver gray silk, with lilies of the valley (John's flower) in her bosom and hair. We in gray thin stuff and roses — sackcloth, I called it, and ashes of roses; for I mourn the loss of my Nan, and am not comforted. We have had a little feast, sent by good Mrs. Judge Shaw; then the old folks danced round the bridal pair on the lawn in the German fashion, making a pretty picture to remember, under our Revolutionary elm. Then, with tears and kisses, our dear girl, in her little white bonnet, went happily away with her good John; and we ended our first wedding. Mr. Emerson kissed her; and I thought that honor would make even matrimony endurable, for he is the god of my idolatry, and has been for years.

After the bridal train had departed, the mourners withdrew to their respective homes and the bereaved family solaced their woe by washing dishes for two hours and bolting the remains of the funeral baked meats. At four, having got settled down, we were all routed up by the appearance of a long line of children filing down our lane, headed by the Misses H. and R. Father rushed into the cellar, and appeared with a large basket of apples, which went the rounds with much effect. The light infantry formed a semi-circle, and was watered by the matron and maids. It was really a pretty sight, these smiling children loaded with wreaths and flowers, standing under the elm in the sunshine, singing in full chorus the song I wrote for them. It was a neat little compliment to the superintendent and his daughter, who was glad to find her 'pome' was a favorite among the 'lads and lassies,' who sang it with 'cheery voices, like robins on the tree.'

Father put the finishing stroke to the spectacle by going off at full speed, hoppity-skip, and all the babes followed in a whirl of rapture at the idea. He led them up and down and round and round until they were tired; then they fell into order, and with a farewell song marched away, seventy of the happiest little ones I ever wish to see.

A few days later an amusing Anti-slavery Tea Party occurred.

Thursday, we set our house in order, and at two the rush began. It had gone abroad that Mr. M. and Mrs.

Captain Brown were to adorn the scene, so many people coolly came who were not invited, and who had no business here. People sewed and jabbered till Mrs. Brown, with Watson Brown's widow and baby, came; then a levee took place.

The two pale women sat silent and serene through the clatter; and the bright-eyed, handsome baby received the homage of the multitude like a little king, bearing the kisses and praises with the utmost dignity. He is named Frederick Watson Brown, after his murdered uncle and father, and is a fair, heroic-looking baby, with a fine head, and serious eyes that look about him as if saying, 'I am a Brown! Are these friends or enemies?' I wanted to cry at once at the little scene the unconscious baby made. Some one caught and kissed him rudely; he did not cry, but looked troubled, and rolled his great eyes anxiously about for some familiar face to reassure him with its smile. His mother was not there; but though many hands were stretched out to him, he turned to Grandma Bridge, and putting out his little arms to her as if she were a refuge, laughed and crowed as he had not done before when she danced him on her knee. The old lady looked delighted and Freddy patted the kind face, and cooed like a lawful descendant of that ancient pair of turtle doves.

When he was safe back in the study, playing alone at his mother's feet, C. and I went in and worshipped in our own way at the shrine of John Brown's grandson, kissing him as if he were a little saint, and feeling highly honored when he sucked our fingers, or walked

on us with his honest little red shoes, much the worse for wear.

Well, the baby fascinated me so that I forgot a raging headache and forty gabbling women all full of clack. Mrs. Brown senior is a tall stout woman, plain, but with a strong, good face, and a natural dignity that showed she was something better than a 'lady' though she did drink out of her saucer and used the plainest speech.

The younger woman had such a patient, heart-broken face, it was a whole Harper's Ferry tragedy in a look. When we got your letter, mother and I ran into the study to read it. Mother read aloud; for there were only C. A., I, and Mrs. Brown, Jr., in the room. As she read the words that were a poem in their simplicity and happiness, the poor young widow sat with tears rolling down her face; for I suppose it brought back her own wedding day, not two years ago, and all the while she cried the baby laughed and crowed as if there was no trouble in the world.

The preparations had been made for twenty at the utmost; so when forty souls with the usual complement of bodies appeared, we grew desperate and our neat little supper turned out a regular 'tea fight.' A., C., B., and I rushed like comets to and fro trying to fill the multitude that would eat fast and drink like sponges. I filled a big plate with all I could lay hands on, and with two cups of tea, strong enough for a dozen, charged upon Mr. E. and Uncle S., telling them to eat, drink, and be merry, for a famine was at hand. They cuddled into a corner; and then feeling

that my mission was accomplished, I let the hungry wait and the thirsty moan for tea, while I picked out and helped the regular Anti-slavery Set.

We got through it; but it was an awful hour; and Mother wandered in her mind, utterly lost in a grove of tea-pots; while B. pervaded the neighborhood demanding hot water, and we girls sowed cake broadcast through the land.

When the plates were empty and the tea-pots dry, people wiped their mouths and confessed at last that they were done. A conversation followed, in which Grandpa B. and E. A. P. held forth, and Uncle and Father mildly upset the world, and made a new one in which every one desired to take a place. Dr. B., Mr. B. T., etc., appeared, and the rattle continued till nine; when some Solomon suggested that the Alcotts must be tired, and every one departed but C. and S. We had a polka by Mother and Uncle, the lancers by C. and B., and an *étude* by S., after which scrabblings of feast appeared, and we 'drained the dregs of every cup,' all cakes and pies were gobbled up, etc., then fell peace upon us, and our remains were interred decently.

CHAPTER XXIII

GYMNASTIC FEVER AND EDUCATION

In 1860, a new development in the educational field at Concord is noted in Miss Alcott's journal.

This amiable town is convulsed just now with a gymnastic fever, which shows itself with great violence in all the schools and young societies generally. Dr. Lewis has 'inoculated us for the disease,' and it has 'taken finely,' for every one has become a perambulating windmill, with all its four sails going as if a wind had set in; and the most virulent cases present the phenomena of black eyes and excoriation of the knobby parts of the frame, to say nothing of sprains and breakage of vessels looming in the future.

The City Fathers approve of it; and the city sons and daughters intend to show that Concord has as much muscle as brain, and be ready for another Concord fight, if Louis Napoleon sees fit to covet this famous land of Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Alcott & Co. Abby and I are among the pioneers, and the delicate vegetable productions clash their cymbals in private, when the beef-eating young ladies faint away and become superfluous *dumb belles*.

Later, under the guise of fiction, she draws an amusing picture of Concord's early experiment in Physical Culture.

Five-and-twenty ladies, all in a row, sat on one side of the hall, looking very much as if they felt like the

little old woman who fell asleep on the king's highway and awoke with abbreviated drapery, for they were all arrayed in gray tunics and Turkish continuations, profusely adorned with many colored trimmings. Five-and-twenty gentlemen, all in a row, sat on the opposite side in the hall, looking somewhat subdued, as men are apt to do when they fancy they are in danger of making fools of themselves. They, also, were *en* costume, for all the dark ones had grown piratical in red shirts, the light ones nautical in blue; and a few boldly appeared in white, making up in starch and studs what they lost in color, while all were more or less Byronic as to collar.

On the platform appeared a pile of dumb-bells, a regiment of clubs, and a pyramid of bean-bags, and stirring nervously among them a foreign looking gentleman, the new leader of the class lately formed by Dr. Thor Turner, whose mission it was to strengthen the world's spine, and convert it to a belief in air and exercise, by setting it to balancing its poles and spinning merrily, while enjoying the 'Sun Cure' on a large scale. His advent formed an epoch in the history of the town, for it was a quiet old village, guiltless of bustle, fashion, or parade, where each man stood for what he was; and being a sagacious set, every one's true value was pretty accurately known. It was a neighborly town, with gossip enough to stir the social atmosphere with small gusts of interest and wonder, yet do no harm. A sensible free-and-easy town, for the wisest man in it wore the worst boots, and no one thought the less of his understanding; the

belle of the village went shopping with a big sun-bonnet and tin pail, and no one thought her beauty lessened; oddities of all sorts ambled peacefully about on their various hobbies, and no one suggested the expediency of a trip on a wooden horse upon which the chivalrous South is always eager to mount an impressionable abolitionist. Restless people were soothed by the lullaby the river sang on its slow journey to the sea, old people found here a pleasant home place to make ready to die in, young people to survey the world from, before taking their first flight; and strangers looked back upon it as a quiet nook full of ancient legends and modern lights, which would keep its memory green when many a gayer spot was forgotten. Anything based upon common sense found favor with its inhabitants, and Dr. Turner's theories, being eminently so, were accepted at once, and energetically carried out. A sort of heathen revival took place, for even the minister and the deacons turned Mussulmen; old ladies tossed bean-bags till their caps were awry, and winter roses blossomed on their cheeks, school children proved the worth of the old proverb 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,' by getting their backs ready before the burdens came; pale girls grew blithe and strong swinging their dumb namesakes; and jolly lads marched to and fro embracing clubs as if longevity were corked up in those wooden bottles, and they all took 'modest quenchers' by the way.

August Bopp, the new leader of the class, was a German possessing but a small stock of English,

though a fine gymnast; and being also a bashful man, the appointed moment had no sooner arrived than he found his carefully prepared sentences slipping away from his memory, as the ice appears to do from under unhappy souls first mounted on skates. An awful silence reigned: Mr. Bopp glanced nervously over his shoulder at the staring rows, more appalling in their stillness than if they had risen up and hooted at him; then piling up the bags for the seventh time, he gave himself a mental shake; . . .

'Ladees und gentlemen: the time have arrived that we shall begin. Will the gentlemen serve the ladees to a wand, each one, then spread themselves about the hall, and follow the motions I will make as I shall count.'

Five minutes of chaos, then all fell into order, and nothing was heard but the leader's voice and the stir of many bodies moving simultaneously. An uninitiated observer would have thought herself in Bedlam; for, as the evening wore on, the laws of society seemed given to the winds, and humanity gone mad. Bags flew in all directions, clubs hurtled through the air, and dumb-bells played a constant accompaniment to the peals of laughter that made better music than any band. Old and young gave themselves up to the universal merriment, and setting dignity aside, played like happy-hearted children for an hour.

Stout Dr. Quackenboss gasped twice round the hall on one toe; stately Mrs. Primmins ran like a girl of fifteen to get her pins before her competitor; Young Inches, four feet three, trotted away with Deacon

Stone on his shoulder, while Mr. Steepleton and Miss Maypole hopped together like a pair of lively young ostriches, and Ned Amadier, the village beau, blew arrows through a pop-gun, like a modern Cupid in peg-tops instead of pinions. . . .

The bustle subsided as suddenly as it arose; and Mr. Bopp, rather damp about the head and dizzy about the eye, but quite composed, appeared saying with the broken English and appealing manner which caused all the ladies to pronounce him 'a dear' on the spot:

'I hope you will excuse me for making this lesson to be more short than it should; but I have exercise nine hours this day, and being just got well from a illness I have not recover the strength I have lost. Next week I shall be able to take time by the hair, so I will not have so much engagements in one day. I thank you for your kindness, and say "good-evening."'

In March, 1860, she writes of her work and of a school festival:

Wrote 'A Modern Cinderella,' with Nan for the heroine and John for the hero. Made my first ball dress for May, and she was the finest girl at the party. My tall, blond, graceful girl! I was proud of her.

Father had his usual school festival, and Emerson asked me to write a song, which I did. On the 16th the schools all met in the hall (four hundred), a pretty posy bed, with a border of proud parents and friends. Some of the fogies objected to the names of Phillips and John Brown. But Emerson said: 'Give it up?

No, no; I will read it.' Which he did, and to my great contentment; for when the great man of the town says 'Do it,' the thing is done. So the choir warbled and the Alcotts were uplifted in their vain minds.

Father was in his glory, like a happy shepherd with a large flock of sportive lambs; for all did something. Each school had its badge, — one pink ribbons, one green shoulder knots, and one wreaths of pop-corn on their curly pates. One school to whom Father had read Pilgrim's Progress told the story, one child after another popping up to say his or her part; and at the end a little tot walked forward, saying with a pretty air of wonder, — 'and behold it was all a dream.'

When it was all over, and Father about to dismiss them, F. H., a tall, handsome lad came to him, and looking up confidingly to the benign old face, asked 'our dear friend Mr. Alcott to accept of Pilgrim's Progress and George Herbert's poems from the children of Concord, as a token of their love and respect.'

Father was much touched and surprised, and blushed and stammered like a boy, while hugging the fine books while the children cheered till the roof rang.

His report was much admired, and a thousand copies printed to supply the demand; for it was a new thing to have a report neither dry nor dull, and the teachers were glad of the hints given making education a part of religion, not a mere bread-making grind for teacher, and an irksome cram for children.

Her father's influence in the educational world was a predominating interest with his daughter, in view of which, it may be worth while to recall 'a dream of Concord,' which

she recorded in a letter sent to her sister Anna, during a stay abroad, picturing an Utopian scene which would have been dear to her father's heart:

I had such a droll dream last night I must tell you. I thought I was returning to Concord after my trip, and was alone. As I walked from the station I missed Mr. Moore's house, and turning the corner, found the scene so changed that I did not know where I was. Our house was gone, and in its place stood a great stone castle, with towers and arches and lawns and bridges, very fine and antique. Somehow I got into it without meeting any one of you, and wandered about trying to find the family. At last I came across Mr. Moore, papering a room, and asked him where his house was. He didn't know me, and said:

'Oh! I sold it to Mr. Alcott for his school, and we live in Acton now.'

'Where did Mr. Alcott get the means to build this great concern?' I asked.

'Well, he *gave* his own land, and took the great pasture his daughter left him — the one that died some ten years ago.'

'So I am dead, am I?' says I to myself, feeling so queerly.

'Government helped build this place, and Mr. A. has a fine college here,' said Mr. Moore, papering away again.

I went on wondering at the news, and looked into a glass to see how I looked dead. I found myself a fat old lady, with gray hair and specs — very like E. P. P. I laughed, and coming to a Gothic window, looked out

and saw hundreds of young men and boys in queer flowing dress, roaming about the parks and lawns; and among them was Pa, looking as he looked thirty years ago, with brown hair and a big white neckcloth, as in the old times. He looked so plump and placid and young and happy I was charmed to see him, and nodded; but he didn't know me; and I was so grieved and troubled at being a Rip Van Winkle, I cried, and said I had better go away and not disturb any one — and in the midst of my woe, I woke up. It was all so clear and funny, I can't help thinking that it may be a foreshadowing of something real. I used to dream of being famous, and it has partly become true; so why not Pa's college blossom, and he get young and happy with his disciples? I only hope he won't quite forget me when I come back, fat and gray and old. Perhaps his dream is to come in another world, where everything is fresh and calm, and the reason why he didn't recognize me was because I was still in this work-a-day world, and so felt old and strange in this lovely castle in the air. Well, he is welcome to my fortune; but the daughter who did die ten years ago is more likely to be the one who helped him to build his School of Concord up aloft.

I can see how the dream came; for I had been looking at Silling's boys in their fine garden, and wishing I could go in and know the dear little lads walking about there in the forenoon. I had got a topknot at the barber's, and talked about my gray hairs, and looking in the glass thought how fat and old I was getting, and had shown the B.'s Pa's picture, which

they thought saintly, etc. I believe in dreams, though I am free to confess that the 'cowcumbers' for tea may have been the basis of this 'alley-gorry-cal-wision.'

CHAPTER XXIV

MEMORIES OF WAR AND PEACE

April, 1861. War declared with the South, and our Concord company went to Washington. A busy time getting them off, and a sad day seeing them off, for in a little town like this we all seem like one family in times like these. At the station the scene was very dramatic, as the brave boys went away perhaps never to come back again. I've often longed for a war, and now I have my wish. I long to be a man; but as I can't fight, I will content myself with working for those who can.

All the philosophy in our house is not in the study; a good deal is in the kitchen, where a fine old lady thinks high thoughts and does kind deeds while she cooks and scrubs.

Nan found that I was wearing all the old clothes she and May left; so the two dear souls clubbed together and got me some new ones; and the great parcel, with a loving letter, came to me as a beautiful surprise.

Nan and John walked up from Cambridge for a day, and we all walked back. Took a sail to the forts, and saw our men on guard there. Felt very martial and Joan of Arcy as I stood on the walls with flags flying over me and cannon all about.

Spent May-day working for our men, three hundred women all sewing together at the hall for two days.

Miss Alcott's intense patriotism coupled with her natural ability as a nurse, made her feel that her duty lay in the direction of hospital service; she consequently volunteered to join the corps of devoted workers at Washington, and was placed on duty at the Union Hospital at Georgetown. There, for six weeks, she did splendid work amid terribly hard conditions, at the end of which time she broke under the strain and was stricken with typhoid-pneumonia. She rallied after weeks of desperate illness, and was able to resume her literary work in the spring of 1863, although she never wholly recovered her health after this almost fatal illness.

In April of this year she wrote, during her convalescence:

Had some pleasant walks and drives, and felt as if born again, everything seemed so beautiful and new. I hope I was, and that the Washington experience may do me lasting good. To go very near death teaches one to value life, and this winter will always be a very memorable one to me.

A few months later she notes:

The month began with some plays at the town-hall to raise funds for the Lyceum. We did very well and some scenes from Dickens were excellent. Father lectured and preached a good deal, being asked like a regular minister and paid like one. He enjoyed it very much and said good things on the new religion which we ought to and shall have. May had orders from Canada and England for her pretty pen-and-ink work and did well in that line.

After the publication of 'Little Women' in 1868, the financial burden was practically lifted from Miss Alcott's

shoulders and she was able to do for her family much that she had longed to do, although she still felt it her bounden duty to devote her entire energy to literary production, not only because she loved her work, but also to provide more generously for the increasing needs of those dear to her. Meanwhile her personal popularity continued to increase and in 1875 she records paying the price of successful authorship:

Kept house at home with two Irish incapables to trot after, and ninety-two guests in one month to entertain. Fame is an expensive luxury. I can do without it. This is my worst scrape, I think. I asked for bread, and got a stone — in the shape of a pedestal.

In addition to the admiring readers who flocked to see her at Concord Miss Alcott was quite overwhelmed by attentions when she appeared in other places. Of a Woman's Congress which she attended at Syracuse, she said:

Write loads of autographs, dodge at the theatre, and am kissed to death by gushing damsels. One energetic lady grasped my hand in the crowd, exclaiming, 'If you ever come to Oshkosh, your feet will not be allowed to touch the ground: you will be borne in the arms of the people! Will you come?' 'Never,' responded Miss A., trying to look affable, and dying to laugh as the good soul worked my arm like a pump-handle, and from the gallery generations of girls were looking on. 'This, this, is fame!'

After some weeks spent in Boston at the Hotel Bellevue, where she could work without disturbance, she wrote of a new project:

Begin to think of buying the Thoreau place for Nan. The $4000 received from the Vt. and Eastern R.R.s must be invested, and she wants a home of her own, now the lads are growing up.

Mother can be with her in winter for a change, and leave me free to write in Boston. Concord has no inspiration for me.

May, at the request of her teacher, M. Muller, sends a study of still-life to the Salon. The little picture is accepted, well hung, and praised by the judges. No friend at court, and the modest work stood on its own merits. She is very proud to see her six months' hard work bear fruit. A happy girl, and all say she deserves the honor.

The purchase of the Thoreau house made it desirable to dispose of the house they had so long occupied and she wrote in the spring of 1878:

E.'s looked at Orchard House and liked it; will hire it probably. Hope so, as it is forlorn standing empty. I never go by without looking up at Marmee's window, where the dear face used to be, and May's, with the picturesque vines round it. No golden-haired, blue-gowned Diana ever appears now; she sits happily sewing baby clothes in Paris. Enjoyed fitting out a box of dainty things to send her. Even lonely old spinsters take an interest in babies.

June, 1878. Went with Father on Sunday to the prison and told the men a story. Thought I could not face four-hundred at first; but after looking at them through the sermon, I felt I could at least amuse

them, and they evidently needed something new, so I told a hospital story, with a little moral to it, and was so interested in watching the faces of some young men near me, who drank in every word, that I forgot myself, and talked away 'like a mother.' One put his head down, and another winked hard, so I felt that I had caught them; for even one tear in that dry, hard place would do them good. Miss McC. and Father said it was well done, and I felt quite proud of my first speech.

The opening session of the School of Philosophy took place in July, 1878, and she notes the arrivals:

The philosophers begin to swarm, and the buzz starts to-morrow. How much honey will be made is still doubtful, but the hive is ready and the drones also.

On the 15th. The School of Philosophy began in the study at Orchard House; thirty students, Father, the dean. He has his dream realized at last, and is in glory, with plenty of talk to swim in. People laugh, but will enjoy something new in this dull old town; and the fresh Westerners will show them that all the culture in the world is not in Concord. I had a private laugh when Mrs. —— asked one of the newcomers, with her superior air, if she had ever looked into Plato. And the modest lady from Jacksonville answered, with a twinkle at me, 'We have been reading Plato in Greek for the past six years.' Mrs. —— subsided after that.

The town swarms with budding philosophers, and they roost on our steps like hens waiting for corn.

Father revels in it, so we keep the hotel going, and try to look as if we liked it. If they were philanthropists, I should enjoy it; but speculation seems a waste of time when there is so much real work crying to be done. Why discuss the 'unknowable' till our poor are fed and the wicked saved.

Four years later, she notes the change that has taken place in Concord's attitude towards the gathering of philosophers:

School of Philosophy opens on the 17th, in full force. I arrange flowers, oak-branches, etc., and then fly before the reporters come. Father is very happy. Westerners arrive, and the house is full with ideal speculators. Penny has a new barge; we call it the 'Blue Plato' (not the 'Black Maria') and watch it rumble by with Margaret Fuller in white muslin, and Hegels in straw hats, while stout Penny grins at the joke as he puts money in his purse. The first year Concord people stood aloof and the strangers found it rather hard to get rooms. Now every one is eager to take them and the school is pronounced a success because it brings money to the town. Even philosophers can't do without food, beds, washing, so all rejoice, and the new craze flourishes. If all our guests paid we should be well off; several hundred a month is rather wearing. Father asked why we never went, and Anna showed him the long list of four-hundred names of callers, and he said no more.

A glimpse of one of Concord's pet enjoyments gives one a charming picture of the important part played by the apple in this literary Utopia.

One of the most delightful (holidays) was the yearly apple picking; . . . one of these fruitful festivals occurred, (on) a mellow October day, when the air was full of an exhilarating freshness which made the spirits rise, and the blood dance healthily in the veins. The old orchard wore its holiday attire; goldenrod and asters fringed the mossy walls; grasshoppers skipped briskly in the sere grass, and crickets chirped like fairy pipers at a feast; squirrels were busy with their small harvesting; birds twittered their adieux from the alders in the lane; and every tree stood ready to send down its shower of red or yellow apples at the first shake. Everybody was there; everybody laughed and sang, climbed up and tumbled down; everybody declared that there never had been such a perfect day or such a jolly set to enjoy it; and every one gave themselves up to the simple pleasures of the hour as freely as if there were no such things as care or sorrow in the world.

October 8, 1878. Dear Marmee's birthday. Never forgotten. Lovely day. Go to Sleepy Hollow with flowers. Her grave is green; blackberry vines with red leaves trail over it. A little white stone with her initials is at the head and among the tall grass over her breast a little bird had made a nest; empty now, but a pretty symbol of the refuge that tender bosom always was for all feeble and sweet things. Her favorite asters bloomed all about, and the pines sang overhead. So she and dear Beth are quietly asleep in God's acre, and we remember them more tenderly each year that brings us nearer them and home.

Went with Dr. W. to the Women's Prison at Sherborn. A lovely drive, and very remarkable day and night. Read a story to the four-hundred women, and heard many interesting tales. A much better place than Concord prison, with its armed wardens, and 'knock down and drag out' methods. Only women here, and they work wonders by patience, love, common sense, and the belief in the salvation of all.

1882. Helped to start a temperance society; much needed in Concord. A great deal of drinking, not among the Irish, but young American gentlemen, as well as farmers and mill-hands. Women anxious to do something but find no interest beyond a few. Have meetings and try to learn how to work. I was secretary and wrote records, letters, and sent pledges, etc., also articles in 'Concord Freeman,' and 'Woman's Journal' about the union and town meetings.

Read over and destroyed Mother's diaries, as she wished me to do. A wonderfully interesting record of her life from her delicate, cherished girlhood through her long, hard, romantic married years, old age and death. Some time I will write a story, or a memoir of it.

The passing of Emerson, who had been to the Alcott family a benefactor, as well as 'guide, philosopher, and friend' came as a sad bereavement.

Mr. Emerson is ill. Father goes to him. E. held his hand, looking up at the tall, sorry old man, and saying with that smile of love that has been Father's sunshine for many years, 'You are very well, — keep

so.' After Father left, he called him back and grasped his hand again, as if he knew it was for the last time, and the kind eyes said 'Good-bye, my friend.'

April 27, 1882. Mr. Emerson died at 9 P.M. suddenly. Our best and greatest American gone. The nearest and dearest friend Father has ever had, and the man who has helped him most by his life, his books, his society. I can never tell all he has been to me, from the time I sang Mignon's song under his window (a little girl) and wrote letters *à la* Bettine to him, my Goethe, at fifteen, up through my hard years, when his essays on Self-Reliance, Character, Compensation, Love, and Friendship helped me to understand myself and life, and God and Nature. Illustrious and beloved friend, Good-bye!

April 30. Emerson's funeral. I made a yellow lyre of jonquils for the church, and helped to trim it up. Private services at the house, and a great crowd at the church. Father read his sonnet, and Judge Hoar and others spoke. Now he lies in Sleepy Hollow among his brothers, under the pines he loved.

To rest in Sleepy Hollow on the enchanted hillside, under the murmuring pines, one by one they have passed, Concord's Immortals; Henry Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and then the Alcotts, father and daughter, to sleep beside their own. Names goodly and beloved not only in the place that they called home, but throughout the length and breadth of the America they loved and whose ideals they cherished.

The good they wrought is not interred with their bones, but has abundant life to-day; their love of Nature, Truth, Beauty, and of Humanity remains a heritage that will increase as years go by. Thousands shall journey yearly to their homes and shall draw inspiration from their works and from the stories of their lives.

How many Nature-lovers shall view the woods and streams through Thoreau's eyes! How many seek the rainbow through the rain, at the 'Old Manse' with Hawthorne! How many meditate on Friendship, Philosophy, and Immortality with Emerson and Alcott! How many search the heart of youth with the beloved author of 'Little Women'!

Time alone can reply to questions such as these, but we to-day, who watch the multitudes of pilgrims seeking Concord shrines can surely divine the answer.

And Concord, beautiful in itself and in its memories, smiling beside its tranquil stream and nestling 'neath its wooded hillsides, is truly blest. Some deem it loveliest when early spring decks it in lacy green and snowy blooms; some praise it most in summer's gay attire; others acclaim its gorgeous autumn tints, but those that love it find it best at every season; and when 'tis hid in fleecy drifts that half obliterate its landmarks, soften its incongruities, and dignify with architectural beauty its simplest structures, then most of all shall it assume to loving eyes the guise of 'Classic Concord.'

ION: A MONODY

Written by A. Bronson Alcott immediately after Emerson's death

WHY, oh, ye willows, and ye pastures bare,
Why will ye thus your blooms so late delay,
Wrap in chill weeds the sere and sullen day,
And cheerless greet me wandering in despair?
Tell me, ah, tell me! ye of old could tell —
Whither my vanished Ion now doth fare —
Say, have you seen him lately pass this way?
Ye who his wonted haunts did know so well?
Heard ye his voice forth from the thicket swell,
Where midst the drooping ferns he loved to stray?
Caught ye no glimpses of my truant there?
Tell me, oh, tell me, whither he hath flown —
Beloved Ion flown, and left ye sad and lone,
Whilst I through wood and field his loss bemoan.

. . . . . .

Slow winds our Indian stream through meadows green,
By bending willows, tangled fen and brake,
Smooth field and farmstead doth its flow forsake:
'Twas in far woodpaths Ion, too, was seen,
But oftenest found at Walden's emerald lake
(The murmuring pines inverted in its sheen);
There in his skiff he rippling rhymes did make,
Its answering shore echoing the verse between.
Full-voiced the meaning of the wizard song,
For wood and wave and shore with kindred will,
Strophe, antistrophe, in turn prolong: —
Now wave and shore and wood are mute and still,
Ion, melodious bard, hath dropped his quill,
His harp is silent and his voice is still.

. . . . . .

Now pillowed near loved Hylas' lowly bed,
Beneath our aged oakes and sighing pines,
Pale Ion rests awhile his laurelled head;
(How sweet his slumber as he there reclines!)
Why weep for Ion here? He is not dead,
Nought of him Personal that mound confines;
The hues ethereal of the morning red
This clod embraces never, nor enshrines.
Away the mourning multitude hath sped,
And round us closes fast the gathering night;
As from the drowsy dell the sun declines,
Ion hath vanished from our clouded sight.
But on the morrow, with the budding May,
A-field goes Ion, at first flush of day,
Across the pastures on his dewy way.

THE END

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Classic Concord

As Portrayed by Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau and the Alcotts

Edited by
Caroline Ticknor

Drawings by May Alcott

Houghton Mifflin Company